

MAY 18, 2009

The American Conservative



Apocalypse Not

Why we can live with an Iranian bomb

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CHICKEN DOVES

The night before I read Justin Raimondo's excellent account ("Peace Out," April 20) of the taming of the antiwar wing of the Obama following—I won't call it a movement—I attended a gathering in Madison, Wisconsin called by Organizing for America (OFA), a creature of the Democratic National Committee. Although I voted for Ralph Nader, I had welcomed, with reservations, the election of Barack Obama, and I would like to move the president in an unambiguously antiwar direction.

The purpose of OFA is to enlist pep clubs that will support the Obama agenda. In keeping with my penchant for subversion, I observed that authentic social movements are not controlled from above. Rather, they emerge from the desires of people who have schooled themselves in issues and who seek to unite with others of like mind.

I described Obama's positions on FISA, state secrets, government spying, torture, and the embrace of widened wars in Western, Central, and Southern Asia as a betrayal of the hopes of his supporters. I said that he is on the way to being a one-term president.

Like the little boy who noticed that the emperor's fundament was uncovered, I gave others in the room permission to tell the OFA organizer that their support for Obama's agenda is conditioned upon his making it an antiwar agenda. At the citizen level, the Obama war is regarded as an obscenity, and I welcome *TAC's* efforts to shame the sunshine soldiers of the antiwar movement.

ALAN BICKLEY
Madison, Wis.

HAYEK NOT KEYNES

Thanks for publishing the article by Sheldon Richman ("Keynesian Cons," April 20).

An overwhelming majority, whether they call themselves liberal or conservative, support a huge interventionist gov-

ernment. Many so-called supporters of free markets are afraid of "too much freedom." With friends like these, we don't need enemies, do we?

Hayek discovered long ago that there is no middle way to combine interventionism with liberty. The failures of government intervention lead to further interventions, which devour liberty and ratchet toward total socialism.

The only way to release that ratchet is to disavow interventionism, root and branch. We need to separate economy and government for the same reason that we separate church and state: absolute power corrupts absolutely.

TERRY MCINTYRE
Via e-mail

LOCALIST LANGUAGE

Thoughts of bilingual education fill me with feelings of rueful shame: ("English Lessons," March 23). We on the Left should have known how wrong we were.

Bilingual education was just one of a succession of symptoms of a greater problem in education, that of the Big Idea. Whether we talk of Carter's education policy or Reagan's or Bush's or Clinton's (or Bush's again) or Obama's, we should ask: do we need any national education policy at all? Shouldn't education policy be left to those most dedicated to students' welfare—their parents?

Education in the United States is now centrally controlled and locally funded. The result is bad policy and unequal resources. I'd like to reverse that, funding centrally but returning policy to local school districts governed by elected school boards. (And I do mean "local"—a school district should be just large enough to field one high school football team.)

As for bilingual education, as Steve Sailer points out, young children are exceptionally able to learn languages. So in my local district, I'd push to have

every child taught in a language other than his family language. Half the school day could be in English with the other half in Spanish or Urdu or Matabele. We shouldn't let that facility for language die from disuse.

CLIFF STORY

Vancouver, Wash.

TUNE OUT

Critical responses like those from reader Vincent Loughnane (Forum, March 23) make John Derbyshire's point about the talk-radio culture more clearly than he was able to himself.

Too often in popular political discourse, "conservative" criticism takes the form of inane stereotypes and self-congratulatory silliness as opposed to genuinely ideological protests.

Thus one who strays from the fold does so to impress "mimosa-drinking liberal friends" from "the Harvard crew team" who "have never had to pay taxes," while the true believers are of course well-steeped in "the real world." Why bother engaging an opponent on the merits of his arguments when you can just call him Al Gore and be done with it?

Turning political disagreements into such cartoon fantasies might do wonders for one's ego, but it is much closer to the vapid emotionalism the popular Right loves to accuse liberals of than the sober logic the Hannitys and Limbaughs enjoy ascribing to themselves.

I read your magazine because it is largely free of this kind of nonsense, and I applaud you for giving Derbyshire a forum to point out the difference.

B.J. CORBITT
Via e-mail

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[POLITICS]

NO IDENTITY POLITICS

The GOP's reputation is so debased that even its leaders seem reluctant to call themselves Republicans. Instead, to reinvigorate their share of the franchise, party bosses have launched the National Council for a New America, coming soon to a townhall meeting near you.

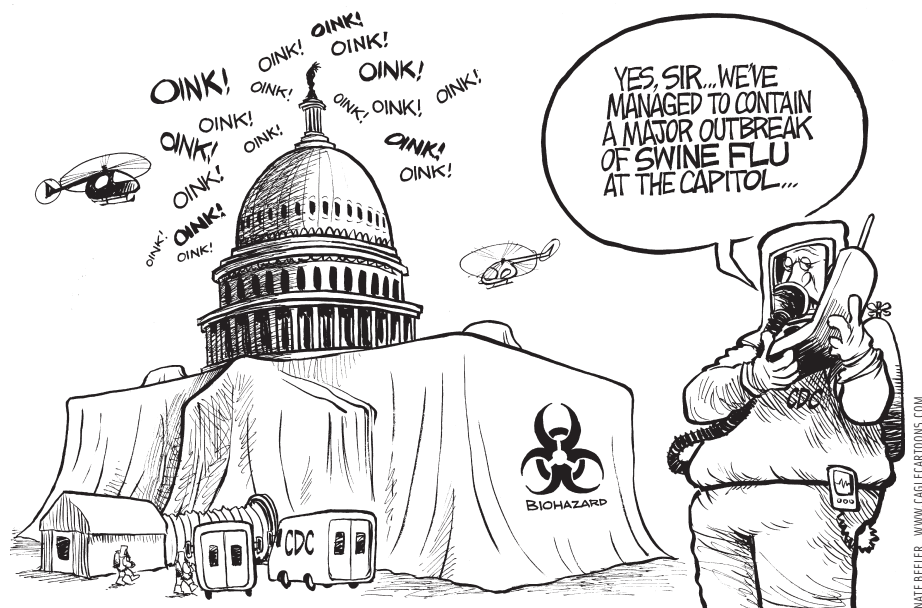
The council's mission, according to its PR blurb, is "to listen to, partner with, and empower the American people." House Minority Whip Eric Cantor insisted that NCNA was "not a rebranding effort." Everybody knows better. To convey a homely mood, the council chiefs held their first meeting in a Northern Virginia pizza parlor. The pols wore open shirts. But they hardly looked comfortable.

Alongside Cantor, Mitt Romney and Jeb Bush held court. A failed presidential candidate and a disastrous president's brother—that's new. The speakers perched awkwardly on stools and talked in management-speak. "It's time to listen first ... to upgrade our message a bit, because, you know, things do ebb and flow," said Governor Bush, meaninglessly. "Ultimately," warbled Cantor, "the future is about trying to be relevant in terms of what we are talking about." Silly though their promise to listen sounded, talking may be worse.

[IRAQ]

SURGE BOMBS

The fallacy that Iraq can be filed as a foreign-policy "success" is being blown apart. On April 28, three bombs went off in Baghdad, killing 51 Iraqis and injuring over 75. The atrocity capped off a bad month for Mesopotamia, the bloodiest in more than a year—300 slaughtered and 600 more wounded. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, having been subdued in 2008, seems now to be honoring its New Year pledge to reap "The Good Harvest."



The media, grasping for a cause, reached for the most obvious. The upturn in violence must be a response to the withdrawal of U.S. troops: as the vaunted surge shrinks, the terror rises. But that logic is flawed. The reduction of American forces has barely begun.

More perceptive reporters observed that, as part of the handover of security duties to the Iraq government, the U.S. has stopped paying the Sunni paramilitaries who were so critical to suppressing violence last year. Without American bribes, this crazy quilt of disparate alliances—never securely stitched—is fast unraveling.

President Obama said that the "spectacular bombings" were "a legitimate cause for concern," but added nothing further. The surgeniks in Washington are already urging him to delay his troop pull-outs until Iraqis are safe again. But that could take, as John McCain prescribed, another thousand years. Here's hoping the new commander in chief doesn't listen.

[IN MEMORIAM]

JACK KEMP (1935–2009)

Before Reagan was Reagan, there was Jack Kemp. The Buffalo Bills quarterback turned Republican congressman, cabinet secretary, and VP nominee was not always right. But he championed the cause of lower taxes before it was popular—at a time when Republicans, misled by Nixon, were inclined to say, "we're all Keynesians now." Kemp and the unorthodox economic thinkers who

advised him—Jude Wanniski, Bruce Bartlett, Paul Craig Roberts—broke the bipartisan tax-and-spend mold of the 1970s.

Unfortunately, as Sheldon Richman has argued in these pages, supply-siders came to resemble their old Keynesian foes. As marginal tax rates fell, deficits—and spending—ballooned. Keynes had provided big-government liberals with a theory to justify their predilections to tax and spend. Supply-side orthodoxy became an excuse for big-government Republicans' predilections to tax-cut and deficit-spend. Even Kemp's optimism, more Reaganite than Reagan, had a dark side: he believed in economic growth at almost any cost, even if it was unsustainable. As HUD secretary, he made a priority of encouraging home ownership—a factor in the mortgage bubble.

But the worst excesses of loose credit and deficit spending should not be laid at the feet of Kemp or his advisers. They were sincere believers in the market, not GOP hacks. Indeed, Kemp displayed his integrity and independence in early 2003, when he bucked his party's line on foreign policy and opposed the Iraq War. "It would be a tragedy if a few War Hawks pushed us into an unnecessary invasion and occupation of an Arab country," he wrote at the time.

Kemp died May 2 after a battle with cancer. Conservatives could benefit, if not from emulating his policies exactly, at least from recapturing something of his spirit.

[COURT]

THE SOUTER PRECEDENT

Supreme Court handicappers didn't bet on David Souter handing President Obama his first high court pick. But Republicans learned long ago not to count on Souter.

Angling to avoid a replay of the Bork debacle, prudent George H.W. Bush opted for a nominee with a light paper trail. That faith-based initiative soon backfired: in the landmark *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the 1992 case in which conservatives anticipated a ruling striking down *Roe v. Wade*, Souter joined Justices Anthony Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor in a compromise that upheld abortion rights. He affects a moderate pose, but his votes have trended left. Thus the president's pick, however liberal, won't significantly tip the balance.

As he constructs his short list, legal scholars needn't wait by their phones.

Obama is shopping for a social worker. He's looking for the "quality of empathy," a peculiar trait given that the job's oath states, "I will administer justice without respect to persons." No matter. He wants "someone who understands that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a case book." Extra points for "real-life experience." (Translation: access to a narrative of oppression, actual or imagined.)

Of course, the usual suspects are all pushing their tokens, but as we go to press, no nominee has been named. Finding a Hispanic lesbian unburdened by legal experience is harder than it looks.

Our hope is that in filling the seat, Obama will choose someone in the tradition of its retiring occupant—as faithful to liberal ideals as David Souter was to the expectations of the Republican president who nominated him. ■

Dear Subscribers,

Two issues ago, we warned that if *The American Conservative's* finances didn't substantially improve, we would be forced to suspend publication. Our community of readers rallied, and we couldn't be more grateful. Through a combination of your generosity and deep cuts here, we have worked out a way to stay in print as a monthly magazine. We're still running a major deficit and need your help more than ever. But this voice of uncompromised conservatism will remain alive.

The first issue of the new, longer *TAC* will go to press on June 18. Of course you will all receive the full allotment of issues specified by your existing subscriptions.

Between this, our final biweekly edition, and the first monthly issue, we encourage you to get your *TAC* fix by visiting our redesigned website—www.amconmag.com. We'll be adding fresh content and exciting new blogs. The estimable Daniel Larison's "Eunomia" will remain, as will our group blog, the lively "@TAC." And we'll soon be welcoming John Schwenkler and J.L. Wall's highly regarded "Upturned Earth," the first of several upcoming additions. The most original young minds on the Right are flocking to *TAC*, and we're delighted that this vibrant hub will survive.

Thank you again for sustaining us through your contributions and subscriptions. We'll see you next month.

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The American Conservative, Vol. 8, No. 10, May 18, 2009 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. *TAC* is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$89.97 other foreign, via airmail. Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries —

By phone: **800-579-6148**
(outside the U.S./Canada 856-380-4131)

Via Web: www.amconmag.com

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to letters@amconmag.com. For advertising sales call Ronald Burr at 703-893-3632. For editorial, call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on May 7, 2009.

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[welcome to the club]

Apocalypse Not

Stalin's nuclear arsenal wasn't the end of the world.
Ahmadinejad's won't be either.

By Michael C. Desch

THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE community has not yet concluded that Iran has even decided to develop a nuclear weapon, but the public debate has moved on to another question: what happens if it does?

There is an overwhelming consensus that it would be an unmitigated disaster for the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop its nuclear program to the point that it could produce a weapon. As Israel's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, warned *The Atlantic's* Jeffrey Goldberg, "You don't want a messianic apocalyptic cult controlling atomic bombs. When the wide-eyed believer gets hold of the reins of power and the weapons of mass death, then the entire world should start worrying, and that is what is happening in Iran."

Despite many disagreements with Netanyahu and his xenophobic foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, President Obama shares the view that "there is no greater threat to Israel—or to the peace and stability of the region—than Iran." As he told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee while campaigning last May,

The Iranian regime supports violent extremists and challenges us across the region. It pursues a nuclear capability that could spark

a dangerous arms race and raise the prospect of a transfer of nuclear know-how to terrorists. Its president denies the Holocaust and threatens to wipe Israel off the map. The danger from Iran is grave, it is real, and my goal will be to eliminate this threat.

To be sure, America's new Democratic president and Israel's new right-wing government have very different strategies for preventing Iran from going ballistic. Obama and much of the international community think that engagement with the Iranians is the best way to prevent the Persian Gulf doomsday clock from ticking down to zero. In contrast, many in Israel, and a significant number of the Jewish state's American supporters, believe that only the Gideon's sword of a pre-emptive military strike will end the mad mullahs' race to Armageddon.

Of course, not everyone shares the apocalyptic rhetoric of the "strike-before-it's-too-late" crowd. Indeed, less fevered minds understand that even if Iran developed a rudimentary nuclear capability, the United States and Israel would have a huge missile advantage. According to the Federation of American Scientists, the U.S. has over 5,000 warheads deployed and a large number

in reserve, while estimates of the Israeli stockpile range from 80 to 200 nuclear devices. At present, Iran has none and, even under worst-case scenarios, is unlikely to have more than a handful in the years to come.

Warheads without a way to deliver them aren't much use. In this respect, Iran is a nuclear pygmy: it has no long-range missiles that can reach the United States. Its medium-range missile capability, which can theoretically reach Israel, is unreliable. In contrast, the Center for Defense Information estimates that Israel has between 100 and 150 Jericho missiles, plus more than 200 F-4E Phantom and F-16 Falcon aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The United States has almost 1,500 nuclear delivery platforms, including Minuteman III and MX intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's), Trident I and II submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's), B-52H Stratofortress and B-2 Spirit long-range bombers, and a variety of tactical nuclear bombs and cruise missiles.

Still, even sophisticated analysts think that, on balance, an Iranian nuclear weapon would have deleterious, if not catastrophic, consequences. The concern is that once Iran develops a nuclear capability, it would become even more aggressive in supporting ter-

rorist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Gaza. Another worry is that an Iranian bomb will set off a regional nuclear arms race. Finally, many Americans fear that once Iran fields a nuclear weapon, it will become even more meddlesome in Iraq. In other words, you don't have to think that an Iranian nuclear weapon is the end of the world to believe that it would be better for all concerned if Tehran never got one.

Any time the conventional wisdom is so one-sided, it makes sense to ask whether it is truly wise or simply an unreasoning article of faith. What has been missing from the debate is a consideration of the possible benefits of Iran crossing the nuclear threshold. No doubt even this suggestion will strike many as the height of academic muddle-headedness. But there are compelling theoretical and historical reasons to think that, far from being a crisis, Iranian membership in the nuclear club might be beneficial to everyone—even Israel.

The theoretical basis for this admittedly counterintuitive claim is political scientist Kenneth Waltz's famous Adelphi Paper, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better." Waltz is not a marginal figure on the lunatic fringe, but rather ranks among the most influential international-relations theorists of the past 30 years. First published in 1981 by the prestigious International Institute for Strategic Studies in London—hardly a crackpot outfit—the paper argues that because nuclear weapons are only useful for deterrence of attacks upon their possessor's homeland, their proliferation, unlike that of other weapons that can be used for offensive operations, should reduce the frequency and intensity of wars. His central assumption is that rational states quickly realize this is the consequence of the nuclear revolution.

History has provided strong evidence that the development of nuclear weapons makes nuclear powers more careful, particularly in their relationships with each other. While there were many Cold War crises between the United States and the Soviet Union (and China), none escalated into major combat, much less all-out nuclear war. The same logic has apparently operated in the Indo-Pakistani relationship, the Kargil conflict of 1999 notwithstanding.

There is good evidence to suggest that the containment of these crises was the result of both sides stepping back from the brink of conflict for fear of unleashing a nuclear nightmare. Reflecting back on the Cuban Missile Crisis

Proponents of the first proposition suffer from historical amnesia. The first two nuclear adversaries the United States faced—Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China—were hardly democratic regimes. Indeed, they rank among history's most totalitarian political systems. Yet neither of these totalitarian regimes risked nuclear war.

Both regimes engaged in mass murder of their own citizens. Conservative estimates of the human cost of Stalin's rule begin at 20 million deaths. Mao killed approximately the same number of his countrymen. Despite these sanguinary tendencies, neither regime was willing to risk nuclear war with the United States.

THERE ARE COMPELLING THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL REASONS TO THINK THAT, FAR FROM BEING A CRISIS, IRANIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE NUCLEAR CLUB MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL—EVEN ISRAEL.

almost 30 years earlier, former secretary of defense Robert McNamara noted, "the lessons of the missile crisis are simple: Nuclear weapons are useful only for deterrence." Former Khrushchev aide Fyodor Burlatsky echoed this point, concluding, "it is impossible to win a nuclear war, and both sides realized that, maybe for the first time."

But for many participants in today's debate about the Iranian nuclear program, history is irrelevant because they think that the mullocracy in Iran is fundamentally different from the Cold War nuclear powers. They make two related arguments. First, Iran is an autocratic regime with little concern for the lives of its citizens, so it would not be deterred from nuclear war simply by the risk of suffering millions of casualties. Second, because Iran is a theocracy, it does not make rational strategic calculations, which are central to Waltz's theory.

Both also indulged in irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. Stalin publicly pooh-poohed the American atomic bomb when told about it by President Truman at Potsdam in July 1945. Behind the scenes, however, he understood that atomic weapons represented a dramatic change in the nature of warfare and secretly began a crash program. The rhetoric of cavalier dismissal concealed a deep concern about nuclear weapons that, in turn, induced caution.

During his 1957 speech at the Moscow Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Mao also dismissed the nuclear-armed United States as "a paper tiger" and remarked elsewhere that a nuclear war with the U.S. would not be such a catastrophe because "if worse came to worst and half of mankind died, the other half would remain while imperialism would be

razed to the ground and the whole world would become socialist.” But in private conversations with Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery in September 1961, he argued that nuclear weapons “are not something to use. The more there are, the harder it will be for nuclear wars to break out.” This latter view apparently governed Chinese behavior.

systematically at recent Iranian history, as Trita Parsi has done in his essential *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.*, two things become clear. Iranian behavior toward the United States and Israel has been remarkably consistent, both before and after the Islamic Revolution. That continuity is largely explained by a realpolitik not

security without providing any of them with the means of conquest against other states?

Arguing that an Iranian nuclear capability could benefit Israel is admittedly a more controversial claim. But in addition to the possible mellowing of the Iranian political system, which would be a long-term benefit for Israeli security, there could be some immediate payoffs, too. A nuclear Iran would certainly change the dynamics of the Persian Gulf, with many Arab states desperately searching for a nuclear ally to balance against Iran. Aside from the United States, Israel is the only counterweight in the region. A nuclear Iran could warm relations between Israel and moderate Arab states throughout the region who regard a powerful Iran—Islamic or not—as a threat.

I’m not arguing that an Iranian nuclear deterrent would have immediate transformative effects. It certainly would not, as more than 40 years of Cold War crises demonstrate. I also concede that the ideal situation would be a world without conflict in which nuclear weapons would be unnecessary. But we don’t live in that world. And so I am led to conclude, based upon our best theory of international relations and the perspective of Cold War history, that an Iranian nuclear deterrent would solve more problems than it creates. To paraphrase the subtitle of Stanley Kubrick’s great nuclear satire “Dr. Strangelove,” it might just be time to stop worrying and learn, if not to love, at least to tolerate the Iranian bomb. ■

Michael C. Desch is a professor of political science and fellow of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic Triumphalism (2008).

IRAN IS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX POLITICAL SYSTEM THAN MOST WESTERN MEDIA ACCOUNTS SUGGEST, AND ITS PRESIDENT IS NOT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ACTOR IN THAT COUNTRY.

The second objection to Waltz’s nuclear optimism is that Iran will not behave as a rational actor because it is an Islamic theocracy that values the afterlife more than the here and now. True, revolutionary Iran fought an eight-year war with Iraq and suffered almost a million casualties. But this is hardly evidence that its leadership and population have a martyrdom complex. It was, after all, secular Iraq, rather than Iran, that started the war, and the Islamic Republic was the first to accept the United Nations’ ceasefire in 1988 once it became clear that the conflict had reached a stalemate. This behavior hardly indicates an irrational commitment to fight to the last Iranian.

There is no doubt that the rhetoric of some Iranian leaders, particularly President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s florid threats that Israel will be “wiped off the map” and his ludicrous denials of the Holocaust, has been inflammatory and irresponsible. Yet we need to keep in mind that Iran is a much more complex political system than most Western media accounts suggest, and its president is not the most significant political actor in that country.

More importantly, when one looks

so different from the logic that informed the policies of the Cold War superpowers.

At various times under both the Shah and the mullahs, Iran sought regional hegemony; at other times, under both regimes, it made overtures to the United States and even to Israel. Thus there is little reason to think that Iran would behave any differently than the Soviet Union or Communist China with nuclear weapons. If we could live with those rogue nuclear states, which were willing to sacrifice millions of their own people to advance an eschatological ideology, there is scant reason to think Iran poses a more serious threat.

One could go further and suggest that a nuclear Iran might even be beneficial to the United States. The nuclear stalemate played an important role in American efforts to contain the Soviet Union, and containment, in turn, had the effect of “mellowing” the regime, as George Kennan predicted in his famous *Foreign Affairs* article. Why should we not expect a regional stalemate involving the United States, Israel, and Iran to have a similar effect by simultaneously bolstering each nation’s territorial

What Is It Good For?

In the nuclear age, there can be no just war.

By Stuart Reid

A LONG TIME AGO, in a galaxy far, far away—actually, it was 1958, in the Royal County of Berkshire—I was staying with a friend from school one Sunday and, as a treat, his mother took us to Mass at the big American air base nearby. In those happy days, the guy in the guard hut did not pat you down with a metal detector before lifting the barrier. He didn't even ask for ID, as I recall, just leaned toward the driver's window, smiled, asked what our business was, and then let us through with a "Yes, ma'am" and a friendly salute.

The chapel was small, businesslike, perhaps rather austere. Above the altar was an electronic indicator board that would have started flashing THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING, or some such, if Soviet bombers had suddenly been detected heading our way. At the back of the chapel, close to the exit, were two airmen in combat gear—jump suits, maps strapped to knees, lots of zips, foil-wrapped Hershey bars stashed somewhere along with vitamins, Benzedrine, Russian phrase books, Swiss Army pen knives, compasses, possibly pistols, or, better still, revolvers...

"Introibo ad altare Dei," said the priest.

"Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam," said the server.

The two airmen followed the familiar, ancient liturgy, as they had done hundreds of times before. It was business as usual: kneel, stand, genuflect, bow, cross yourself, try not to let your mind wander or your eyes stray, and be ready to scramble if that freakin' sign begins to

flash. It would not for a moment have occurred to these two good young men that there was anything incongruous about being dressed to kill while worshipping the Prince of Peace, and to kill, furthermore, on a scale never hitherto imagined.

Nor, I doubt, would it have occurred to anyone else at Mass that morning. So far as we boys were concerned, everything was not only congruous but admirable and glamorous. This was the real deal. We were in America, if vicariously, among people who came from the same gene pool as Pat Boone and Montgomery Clift, Doris Day and Natalie Wood, Shelley Berman and Bob Newhart, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. To have been a teenager in England in the late 1950s was to have been an American. We were the products of cultural imperialism, and we loved it. No yoke was ever sweeter.

The Cold War was a motion picture or a giant game of chicken or both. The U.S. was James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause." Russia the smirking boy with the comb between his teeth who chickens first but gets his sleeve stuck in the door handle and drives his car over the cliff. But there was more to this than glamour; it wasn't only make-believe. This was a world of certainty, of moral clarity. These airmen were defending us against atheistic communism and therefore against slave camps, mass murder, and nerdy clothes. To us the nuclear deterrent was cool, and it obviously worked because there had not been a world war for at least 13 years. I mean,

duh! (as we had not yet learnt to say). Only wimps and fellow travelers were against the deterrent.

Now we live in another galaxy. In the 50 years since I knelt with those airmen, the world has changed out of all recognition, and then some. The Cold War has ended, and Western values have triumphed. Films that would once have been restricted are now rated PG. There are rock concerts in Red Square. The Mass is in English. Phil Spector has been banged up for murder. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.

Was it worth it? To a liberal capitalist, certainly; to a liberal democrat, perhaps; but surely not to a conservative. The Cold War itself increasingly looks like displacement therapy, or a military-industrial scam. Who now seriously believes that Washington would have risked millions of American lives in a war over Berlin? As for the nuclear deterrent, it's obviously time to join the peace activists. There will always be nukes, of course—you can't unsplit the atom—and while Russia and China have them, it is perhaps just as well that the United States should have them, too. Even so, their deployment signals that you are prepared to massacre civilians, and that is against the rules of war. It is barbaric. It is also stupid, since one of these devices could go off when you are not looking, especially if it were to find its way into the hands of an Islamist or a survivalist with a grudge.

Whatever else he may be, Barack Obama is not stupid, and he can see the downside of deterrent. The president

may not be hanging as loose as he did on the hustings, but the brand looked pretty assured in Prague last month when he undertook to lead the world into a nuclear-free future.

"Today," he told his Czech brothers and sisters, "I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." No one could object to that. Or to: "[A]s a nuclear power—as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon—the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it."

Maybe you could object to that last if you were, say, Bill Kristol. Immediately after the Prague speech the son of the father of neoconservatism pursed his lips in the *Washington Post* and wondered bossily whether Obama meant to imply disapproval of America's use of nuclear weapons in 1945.

The substance of Kristol's beef, however, was that peace could not be secured the Obama way—by talking to bad guys like the Iranians—but only by spreading "liberal democracy" and encouraging "responsible regimes." Could he really be saying this? Again? Gulp. Yes, he could. "But," added Kristol, "we have a long way to go before achieving a world of pacific liberal regimes. George W. Bush's hope for a world without tyranny is the necessary—though perhaps still not the sufficient—precondition to a world without nuclear weapons."

If a nuclear-free future is contingent on a string of Iraqs, then forget it: let's keep the nukes. But maybe things are not as desperate as Kristol fears. Once you removed the glossy packaging, there was less to Obama's rhetoric than met the eye. At one point he gave us a glimpse of something that closely resembled the Bush doctrine. "Let me be clear," he said. "Iran's nuclear and

ballistic missile activity poses a real threat, not just to the United States, but to Iran's neighbors and our allies. The Czech Republic and Poland have been courageous in agreeing to host a defense against these missiles. As long as the threat from Iran persists, we intend to go forward with a missile defense system that is cost-effective and proven."

Iran is no danger to anyone, least of all the United States, but in Prague Obama chose to maintain the fiction that the deployment of missile defense shields in Poland and the Czech Republic is nothing more, and nothing less, than good old Yankee altruism. These shields, he was saying, will defend you against nuclear attack by Iran. Oh, yeah? I am grateful to Justin Raimondo for drawing my attention to this report from Prague in the *Daily Telegraph*:

Arena Protivinska, 30, described herself as a 'big fan' of Mr. Obama but accused him of 'hypocrisy' for urging world peace while also pushing forward with the missile shield. 'He sounded like George W. Bush saying that we should be afraid in order to justify missile defense.'

Still, it would be churlish not to acknowledge that Obama did us all a service in Prague by reminding us that America, as the only nation ever to have used nukes, had a moral responsibility to act. The arguments against nuclear weapons have not changed since Hiroshima, and it never does any harm to return to first principles.

The key point, the one that trumps all others, is that you may not do evil that good may come of it. The argument that dropping the atomic bombs on Japan was no crime because it ended the war is no argument at all. Women are perhaps better at seeing this than are men. Here is Dorothy Day's reaction to the news from Japan in August 1945:

Mr. Truman was jubilant. President Truman. True man; what a strange name, come to think of it. We refer to Jesus Christ as true God and true Man. Truman is a true man of his time in that he was jubilant. He was not a son of God, brother of Christ, brother of the Japanese, jubilating as he did. He went from table to table on the cruiser which was bringing him home from the Big Three conference, telling the great news; 'jubilant' the newspapers said. Jubilate Deo. We have killed 318,000 Japanese.

That is, we hope we have killed them, the Associated Press, on page one, column one of the *Herald Tribune* says. The effect is hoped for, not known. It is to be hoped they are vaporized, our Japanese brothers, scattered, men, women and babies, to the four winds, over the seven seas. Perhaps we will breathe their dust into our nostrils, feel them in the fog of New York on our faces, feel them in the rain on the hills of Eaton.

The great English philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe was another who recognized the wickedness that had been done in our name. In 1956, while a research fellow at Oxford, she protested vigorously against the university awarding an honorary degree to Harry S. Truman. She wrote an unforgiving pamphlet setting out her reasons for believing that the former president should be reviled rather than honored. Like Dorothy, she was not too sissy to use scorn as a weapon:

I have long been puzzled by the common cant about President Truman's courage in making this decision [to drop the bomb]. Of course, I know that you can be cowardly without having reason to

think you are in danger. But how can you be courageous? Light has come to me lately: the term is an acknowledgement of the truth. Mr. Truman was brave because, and only because, what he did was so bad. But I think the judgment unsound. Given the right circumstances (e.g., that no one whose opinion matters will disapprove), a quite mediocre person can do spectacularly wicked things without thereby becoming impressive.

Where would we be without women? Men don't like the truth about modern war, which is that it is often both criminal and cowardly. The rot began in World War II when, abandoning all civilized rules of conduct, we terrorized and murdered hundreds of thousands of German and Japanese civilians by using so-called conventional weapons. Then we developed a way of using nuclear power to kill even more people but at less risk to ourselves. Risk-free war is what we now crave, with the almost invariable result that—despite the skill and courage of the poor bloody infantry—more civilians than combatants die when the drums begin to roll. The smart bombs we drop from drones operated from Kissimmee, or wherever, are seldom clever enough to distinguish between a terrorist training camp and a bunch of whirling dervishes at a folk wedding.

The truth is that man is no longer civilized enough to wage war. It's why we lost in Vietnam and Iraq. It is why we will lose in Afghanistan. War doesn't work. "[W]ar is the worst solution for all sides," said Pope Benedict XVI in August 2006. "It brings no good to anyone, not even to the apparent victors. We understand this very well in Europe, after the two world wars." ■

Stuart Reid writes from London.

Right Reflections

Conservatism should oppose the liberal state without becoming statist.

By David Bromwich

CONSERVATISM MAY HAVE given up too much when it became an -ism. "A disposition to preserve," wrote Edmund Burke, "and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman. Everything else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution." He never called himself conservative. The adjective and the noun both came into English too late for that. Yet synonyms were available, and Burke did not make use of those, either.

Ability, as he saw it, was an expression of active energy—not always a good thing. Disposition, on the other hand, is fixed. It never goes anywhere. So Burke distrusted energy in politics—distrusted (you might say) people and countries that want to be on the move. The last sentence of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* turns from its ostensible subject and alludes to the British Empire and its crimes. This book, he tells the French politician for whom he has written it, is the work of one "who snatches from his share in the endeavours which are used by good men to discredit opulent oppression, the hours he has employed on your affairs; and who in doing so persuades himself he has not departed from his usual office." *Opulent oppression*: as if riches sometimes did things other than buoy up a well-earned mass of property.

"A disposition to preserve" is the central intuition of many Americans who call themselves libertarians. Some of them also call themselves conservatives, but if they say that word, they

know they will spend the afternoon in explanation. Their perception is that you should not have to earn the right to live unmolested. The main harm of property would seem to be its encouragement of self-conceit, but though wary of the danger, the creed of liberty is to live and let live without resentment. The broadness of so simple an appeal is a tremendous political resource, and it makes the libertarian the natural antagonist of people who like to be up and doing things—for themselves, for others. The distinction of person is immaterial, the point is to keep going. But it is shallow to think of such people as liberals. They descend from a timeless party of improvers, and there is goodwill in their energy. Even virtue, however, needs some check.

"I do not like to see," said Burke, "any thing destroyed; any void produced in society; any ruin on the face of the land." Might there be some link between the cause of constitutional liberty and the defense of an environment without which all creation would shrink to a man-made scale? This seems at least a possible convergence of motives between people of diverse beliefs whose largest concern is the protection of a restrained liberty.

It is an odd fact of American society in the past 60 years that a section of the party of improvers—the improvers of wars—have so often called themselves conservatives. There are family dynasties of warriors, of course, especially in the South, who form an undeclared

aristocratic class in America. Their authority and coherence may give them a title to the name, but their beliefs do not. It is no less strange—except that one saw it also in the 1950s—that property libertarians have so often failed to live up to their duties as civil libertarians.

It would be hard to say whether statist liberals or statist conservatives are more seduced by love of the state. The most acute recent critics of the American empire have been writers like Chalmers Johnson and Andrew Bacevich who in the decade of Truman and Eisenhower would surely have been called conservatives. Both served in the military. Both came late to their stand against imperialism. If critics such as these ever joined forces with a statesman like Chuck Hagel, we might see a change in the things that are speakable in our politics.

It has been invigorating in the past few years to notice the first signs of a conservatism that is libertarian about civil rights as much as property rights; distrustful of the liberal state but not itself illiberal or the tool of bigotry; willing to speak of morals and religion but distrustful of compelled displays of piety; and hostile to any proselytism that claims a higher sanction than honest argument. Will the experiment succeed? The answer may depend in some part on its relationship to the remnant of liberalism that values liberty.

The antiwar element of this conservatism is its most rigorous and honor-

able feature. Wars are the destructive force that in the 20th century did most to level the world to obey a single will. Wars are the largest machine for the production of the totalitarian state and the totalitarian mind. It should trouble us to consider which country in the world today most serves the cause of “homicide philanthropy.” That phrase, again, is Burke’s; its exact synonym, “humanitarian wars,” is a favorite pretext of the war improvers. What do humanitarian wars signify if not the rightness of killing 3 million Vietnamese or a million Iraqis for the sake of turning a mass of oppressed creatures into properly certified human beings?

HOW SAFE DO YOU WANT TO BE? THE STATE LIVES FOR ITSELF AND WILL NOT LET YOU LIVE TWO MOMENTS TOGETHER UNWATCHED AND UNSECURED.

Government has a better function than war. “The legitimate object of government,” wrote Abraham Lincoln, “is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, *at all*, or can not *so well do*, for themselves—in their separate, and individual capacities.” The people, in their separate and individual capacities, realize the need for government, and make the choice to use it, to help them do what they would want done if they could do it themselves. Lincoln took government as a matter-of-fact necessity. For there are things such as posts and roads, the man-agement of places of public gathering,

the rational regulation of commerce, which we cannot sanely think of doing neighbor-by-neighbor. We cannot decline all use of government unless we cherish an abstract distrust of convenience. Government multiplies rather than adds; the advantage is plain and so is the hazard. But how many today who rail against government do not think it reflexively right to put offending Americans in larger numbers into bigger prisons and to subsidize more and faster wars?

The expansive ethic of modern war, or “force projection,” is justified by the imperatives of security and safety. But how safe do you want to be, and what

makes you call it safety? The state lives for itself and will not let you live two moments together unwatched and unsecured.

“Power, in whatever hands, is rarely guilty of too strict limitations on itself.” Burke wrote that in 1777, when he denounced the suspension of habeas corpus. Power *in whatever hands*. Not only the power that forms a government by popular mandate that can be used to authorize “new laws” but equally the power of those with money to buy an exemption for themselves from sufferings they caused; the power of tribunals to render judgment without oversight; the power of those who deploy an army on the ground and drones in the sky to watch and kill a thousand miles away from the man who presses *send*. ■

David Bromwich is the editor of a selection of Edmund Burke’s speeches and letters, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform* (Yale University Press).

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Change in 2012

FOR CONSERVATIVES fretful over the future of the party to which they have given allegiance, *How Barack Obama Won: A State by State Guide to the Historic 2008 Election* reads like something out of Edgar Allan Poe. Co-authored by NBC's Chuck Todd, it is a grim tale of what happened to the GOP in 2008 and what the future may hold.

Yet on second and third reads, one discerns, as did General Wolfe's scouts 250 years ago, a narrow path leading up the cliff to the Plains of Abraham—and perhaps victory in 2012.

First, the bad news. Obama raised the national share of the black vote to 13 percent, then swept it 95 percent to 4 percent. The GOP share of the Hispanic vote, now 9 percent of the electorate, fell from George W. Bush's 40 percent against John Kerry to 32 percent. Young voters ages 18 to 29 went for Obama 66 percent to 31 percent. And Obama ran stronger among white voters with a college education than did either Al Gore or Kerry.

Put starkly, the voting groups growing in numbers—Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans, folks with college degrees, the young—are all trending Democratic, while the voters most loyal to the GOP—white folks and religious conservatives—are declining as a share of the U.S. electorate. And demography is destiny.

Other grim news: 18 states and Washington, D.C., with 247 electoral votes—all New England save New Hampshire; New York and New Jersey; the mid-Atlantic states, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland; Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota; the three Pacific Coast states plus Hawaii—have gone Democratic in all of the last five presidential elections. And John McCain lost every one of them by double digits. In this Slough of Despond, where is the hope?

Despite all of the above, John McCain, two weeks after the GOP convention, thanks to the surge in energy and enthusiasm Sarah Palin brought to the ticket, was running ahead of Obama.

It was the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the crash and the panic that ensued, which McCain mishandled, that lost him all the ground he never made up. Had the crash not occurred, the election might have been much closer than seven points, which in itself is no blowout.

Second, an astonishing 75 percent of voters thought the country was headed in the wrong direction. Obama won these voters 62 percent to 36 percent. But if the country is seen as heading in the wrong direction in 2012, it will be Obama's albatross.

Third, only 27 percent of voters approved of Bush's performance as of Election Day; 71 percent disapproved. Only Harry Truman had a lower rating, 22 percent, and Democrats were also wiped out in Washington in 1952.

Here is Todd's dramatic point: "With the single exception of Missouri, which barely went for McCain, Obama won every state where Bush's approval rating was below 35 percent in the exit polls, and he lost every state where Bush's approval was above 35 percent."

Obama rode Bush's coattails to victory. Had Bush been at 35 percent or 40 percent, McCain might have won. But in 2012, Obama will not have Bush to kick around anymore.

On candidates' qualities, the situation looks even rosier for the GOP. In 2008, no less than 34 percent of the electorate said that the most important consideration in a candidate was that he be for "change."

Obama was the change candidate. He patented the brand, and he carried this third of the nation 89 percent to 9 percent.

But in 2012, Obama cannot be the candidate of change. That title will belong to his challenger, the Republican nominee. Obama will be the incumbent, the candidate of continuity.

The second most critical consideration of voters in choosing a president was "values." No less than 30 percent of the electorate said this was their primary consideration in voting for McCain or Obama.

Among values voters, fully 30 percent of the electorate, McCain won 65 percent to 32 percent, or by two to one.

What these numbers demonstrate is that liberals and neocons instructing the GOP to dump the social, moral, and cultural issues are counseling Republicide. When African-Americans, who gave McCain 4 percent of their votes in California, gave Proposition 8, prohibiting gay marriage, 70 percent of their votes, why would the GOP give up one of its trump cards—not only in Middle America but among minorities?

A conservative who could have sharpened the social, moral, and cultural differences might, from the exit polls, have done far better.

McCain's diffidence on life, affirmative action, and gay rights, his embrace of amnesty and NAFTA, all help explain the enthusiasm gap. Twice as many voters were excited about the prospects of an Obama presidency as were about a McCain presidency.

Lastly, on Election Day, only 7 percent thought the U.S. economy was doing well, while 93 percent rated it as not so good or poor. The GOP will not have to wear those concrete boots in 2012.

The tide is still running strong against the GOP. But there may be one or two more White Houses in the Grand Old Party yet. ■

Saving Israel From Itself

The two-state solution is the only way to guarantee the Jewish state's long-term security—and our own.

By John J. Mearsheimer

THE UNITED STATES and Israel fundamentally disagree about the need to establish a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. President Obama is committed to a two-state solution, while Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu is opposed and has been for many years. To avoid a direct confrontation with Washington, Netanyahu will probably change his rhetoric and talk favorably about two states. But that will not affect Israel's actions. The never-ending peace process will go on, Israel will continue building settlements, and the Palestinians will remain locked up in a handful of impoverished enclaves in the West Bank and Gaza. Anticipating this outcome, Obama has told Congress to expect a clash with Israel.

This is not a fight Obama is likely to win, even though the United States is more powerful than Israel and most Americans favor creating a Palestinian state and bringing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a close.

Look at the historical record. Since 1967, every American president has opposed settlement-building in the Occupied Territories. Yet no president has been able to put meaningful pressure on Israel to stop building settlements, much less dismantle them. Perhaps the best evidence of American impotence is what happened during the Oslo peace process in the 1990s. Israel confiscated 40,000 acres of Palestinian land, constructed 250 miles of connector and bypass roads, doubled the

number of settlers, and built 30 new settlements. President Clinton did hardly anything to halt this expansion.

The main reason no president has been able to stop Israel from colonizing the Occupied Territories is the Israel lobby. It is an especially powerful interest group that has pushed the American government to establish a "special relationship" with Israel, which is, as Yitzhak Rabin once said, "beyond compare in modern history."

The special relationship means Washington gives Israel consistent, almost unconditional diplomatic backing and more foreign aid than any other country. In other words, Israel gets this aid even when it does things that the United States opposes, like building settlements. Furthermore, Israel is rarely criticized by American officials and certainly not by anyone who aspires to high office. Recall what happened earlier this year to Charles Freeman, who was forced to withdraw as head of the National Intelligence Council because he had criticized certain Israeli policies and questioned the merits of the special relationship.

Many hope that Obama will be different from his predecessors and stand up to the lobby. The indications thus far are not encouraging. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama responded to charges that he was "soft" on Israel by pandering to the lobby and publicly praising the special relationship. He was silent during the recent Gaza War—

when Israel was being criticized around the world for its brutal assault on that densely populated enclave—and he said nothing when Freeman was forced to quit his administration. Like his predecessors, Obama appears to be no match for the lobby.

Israel's supporters in the United States often claim that the special relationship is not due to the lobby's influence. The American people, they argue, identify closely with Israel and put significant pressure on their leaders to support it generously and unconditionally. But there is abundant evidence showing that this is not true. Recent polls indicate that over 70 percent of Americans think that the U.S. should not take sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and only 47 percent of Americans think that Israel's influence in the world is "mainly positive." Moreover, 60 percent of Americans have said that the United States should withhold aid to Israel if it resists pressure to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

In short, a clear majority of Americans do not favor the special relationship and would back Obama if he leaned on Israel to accept a Palestinian state. The lobby, however, would surely side with Israel and pressure the White House to back off. Given the lobby's track record—as well as Obama's—it is difficult to imagine him not caving.

Israel's supporters defend the special relationship because they believe it is an unalloyed good for both countries. In

essence, they think that the two countries' interests are synonymous, and whatever Israel deems good for Israel is good for the United States. From their perspective, there is no need for Israel to change its behavior on any major policy issue, especially on matters relating to the Palestinians.

But they are wrong. Israel's interests, like any other country's interests, are not always the same as America's. Thus it makes little sense for Washington to back Israel no matter what it does because sometimes there will be circumstances in which the two countries' interests clash. For example, it probably made good sense for Israel to acquire nuclear weapons in the 1960s, since it lives in a dangerous neighborhood and a nuclear arsenal is the ultimate deterrent. But a nuclear-armed Israel was not in the American national interest.

Both countries would be much better off if the Obama administration treated Israel the way it treats other democracies, such as Britain, France, Germany, and India. In practice, this would mean backing Israel when its actions are consistent with American interests. But when they are not, Washington would distance itself from Jerusalem and use its considerable leverage to change Israeli behavior.

The United States is in deep trouble in the Middle East and has a serious terrorism problem in good part because of its unconditional support for Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories. Backing Israel at almost every turn also makes it harder for Washington to get open support from moderate Arab states, even when dealing with common threats like Iran.

Israel's backers often maintain that American support for Israel had nothing to do with 9/11, but this claim is simply not true. Consider the motivations of Khalid Sheik Muhammed, whom the 9/11 Commission describes

as the "principle architect of the attacks." According to the commission, "KSM's animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experiences there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel." Numerous independent accounts have also documented that Osama bin Laden has been deeply concerned about the Palestinian situation since he was young, and the 9/11 Commission reports that he wanted the attackers to strike Congress, which he saw as the most important source of support for Israel in the United States. The commission also tells us that bin Laden twice wanted to move the date of the attacks forward because of events involving Israel—even though doing so would have increased the risk of failure.

ISRAEL'S INTERESTS, LIKE ANY OTHER COUNTRY'S INTERESTS, ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME AS AMERICA'S. THUS IT MAKES LITTLE SENSE FOR WASHINGTON TO BACK ISRAEL NO MATTER WHAT IT DOES.

In short, there is little hope of ending America's terrorism problem and improving its standing in the Middle East if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not resolved. That will only happen if there is a two-state solution, and that will only occur if the United States puts pressure on Israel.

The special relationship has become a liability for Israel as well. No country has ever pursued a flawless foreign policy, yet the lobby makes it impossible for American leaders to criticize Israel when it does something foolish. Think of the 2006 Lebanon War, when Washington backed Israel to the hilt while it employed a strategy that was, as most Israelis now recognize, boneheaded. The United States would have been a better friend had it pressured Israel to

come up with a smarter response or pressed for a quick ceasefire. But that is not how the special relationship works. It is hard to see how this situation makes good sense for Israel.

So how should the Obama administration react to Netanyahu's opposition to a Palestinian state? The key to understanding this vital issue is to consider two questions. First, what does Israel's future look like in the absence of a two-state solution? In other words, where is Israel headed if Netanyahu gets his way? Second, what are the likely consequences for America, Israel, and the Palestinians?

Given present circumstances, there are three possible alternatives if the Palestinians do not get their own state, all of which involve creating a "greater Israel"—an Israel that effectively con-

trols the West Bank and Gaza, or all of what was once called Mandatory Palestine.

In the first scenario, greater Israel would become a democratic binational state in which Palestinians and Jews enjoy equal political rights. This solution has been suggested by a handful of Jews and a growing number of Palestinians. It means abandoning the original Zionist vision of a Jewish state, however, since the Palestinians would eventually outnumber the Jews in greater Israel. Uri Avnery, a prominent Israeli journalist and peace activist, is surely correct when he says, "There is no chance at all that the Jewish public will agree, in this generation or the next, to live as a minority in a state dominated by an Arab majority."

Israel's supporters in America would also have virtually no interest in this outcome.

Second, Israel could expel most of the Palestinians from greater Israel, thereby preserving its Jewish character through an overt act of ethnic cleansing. This seems unlikely, not just because it would be a crime against humanity, but also because there are about 5.5 million Palestinians between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and they would put up fierce resistance if Israel tried to expel them from their homes.

Still, there are good reasons to worry that Israel might adopt this solution as the demographic balance shifts and concerns about the survival of the Jewish state intensify. It is apparent from public-opinion surveys and everyday discourse that many Israelis hold racist views about Palestinians, and the recent Gaza War made clear that they have few qualms about killing Palestinian civilians. A century of conflict and four decades of occupation will do that to a

nected and economically crippled enclaves. Israelis and their American supporters invariably bristle at the comparison to white rule in South Africa, but that is their future if they create a greater Israel while denying full political rights to an Arab population that will soon outnumber the Jewish population in the entirety of the land. Former prime minister Ehud Olmert said as much when he proclaimed that if "the two-state solution collapses," Israel will "face a South-African-style struggle." He went so far as to argue, "as soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished." Other Israelis, as well as Jimmy Carter and Bishop Desmond Tutu, have warned that continuing the occupation will turn Israel into an apartheid state.

These three outcomes are the only alternatives to a two-state solution, and each would be disastrous for the Jewish state. Apartheid is not a viable long-term solution because the Palestinians will continue to resist until they achieve independence. Their resistance will force

ous Palestinians would dominate its politics. That leaves ethnic cleansing, which would certainly keep Israel Jewish. That murderous strategy, however, would do enormous damage to Israel's moral fabric, its relationship with Jews in the diaspora, and its international standing. Israel and its supporters would be treated harshly by history. No genuine friend of Israel could support such a heinous course of action.

Given this grim situation, it is not surprising that a significant number of Israelis have moved abroad and many others would leave if they could. There are somewhere between 700,000 and 1 million Israeli Jews living outside the country, many of whom are unlikely to return. Since 2007, emigration has been outpacing immigration in Israel. According to scholars John Mueller and Ian Lustick, "a recent survey indicates that only 69 percent of Jewish Israelis say they want to stay in the country, and a 2007 poll finds that one-quarter of Israelis are considering leaving, including almost half of all young people." They report, "in another survey, 44 percent of Israelis say they would be ready to leave if they could find a better standard of living elsewhere," and "over 100,000 Israelis have acquired European passports." These figures are a bad omen for Israel.

This discussion of where Israel is heading raises the obvious question: would it not be in Israel's best interests for President Obama to put significant pressure on both Israel and the Palestinians to agree to a two-state solution? In fact, would it not have been better for Israel if the United States had long ago stopped it from building settlements and instead helped create a Palestinian state? One wonders what future the opponents of a two-state solution envision for greater Israel, for it is hard to see a favorable outcome if the Palestinians do not get their own state. This is not to say that two states living side by

WOULD IT NOT HAVE BEEN **BETTER FOR ISRAEL** IF THE UNITED STATES HAD LONG AGO **STOPPED IT FROM BUILDING SETTLEMENTS** AND INSTEAD HELPED **CREATE A PALESTINIAN STATE**?

people. Furthermore, a substantial number of Israeli Jews—40 percent or more—believe that the Arab citizens of Israel should be "encouraged" to leave by the government. Indeed, former foreign minister Tzipi Livni recently said that if there were a two-state solution, she expected Israel's Palestinian citizens to leave and settle in the new Palestinian state.

The final and most likely alternative is some form of apartheid, whereby Israel increases its control over the Occupied Territories, but allows the Palestinians limited autonomy in a set of discon-

Israel to escalate the same repressive policies that have already cost significant blood and treasure, encouraged political corruption, and badly tarnished the nation's global image. More importantly, there would be little support and much opposition to an apartheid state in the West, especially in the United States, where democracy is venerated and segregation is condemned. This is why Olmert said that going down the apartheid road would be suicidal for Israel.

But bringing democracy to greater Israel would also mean the end of the Jewish state because the more numer-

side represents an ideal outcome for either side; it is simply better than the alternatives.

Finally, denying the Palestinians their own state is not in the lobby's interest, and not just because of the consequences for Israel. Over the past two decades, the case for backing Israel—no matter what it does—has become a tough sell in the United States, especially on college campuses.

BECAUSE ISRAEL'S TREATMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS WILL BE INCREASINGLY HARD TO DEFEND, THE LOBBY WILL HAVE TO RELY MORE THAN EVER ON THREATS AND INTIMIDATION. FACTS AND REASON ARE NOT EFFECTIVE WEAPONS WHEN TRYING TO JUSTIFY AN APARTHEID STATE.

Younger Jews appear to be more willing to criticize Israel than their elders. Americans of all persuasions are becoming increasingly aware of what Israel did to the Palestinians in 1948 and what it has been doing in the Occupied Territories since 1967. Consequently, Israel no longer looks like the victim; it looks like the victimizer, and a ruthless one at that. This situation is sure to get worse if Israel turns itself into an apartheid state in full view of the world.

Because Israel's treatment of the Palestinians will be increasingly hard to defend, the lobby will have to rely more than ever on threats and intimidation. Facts and reason are not effective weapons when trying to justify an apartheid state. Given the growing awareness of the lobby's activities—thanks mainly to the Internet—its actions are already being scrutinized in ways they were not in the past. In other words, it has become difficult for the lobby to wield its influence without leaving fingerprints, and greater recognition of its role is likely to trigger greater

resentment. Its torpedoing of the Freeman appointment, which was widely discussed in the blogosphere and eventually by the mainstream media, is a case in point. The lobby's behavior will become more heavy-handed and transparent, which runs the risk of angering large numbers of Americans, including many Jews. It would be much easier for the lobby to defend Israel if it lived alongside a Palestinian state.

President Obama would like to change the situation because he understands that a two-state solution would be good for America, good for Israel, and good for the Palestinians. But Netanyahu seems determined to thwart his efforts. Who is likely to win this fight?

As things stand, Obama has little chance of prevailing, mainly because the lobby's key institutions will side with Israel, and the American president shows little sign of being willing to take on the lobby. Other factors also weigh against him. There are about 480,000 settlers and a huge infrastructure of roads and settlements in the West Bank. Given that the political center of gravity in Israel has shifted sharply to the right over time, it is hard to imagine any Israeli government having the political will, much less the ability, to dismantle a substantial portion of that enormous enterprise. Consider that a February 2009 poll found that 59 percent of Israelis opposed a Palestinian state; only 32 percent supported it.

Nor is there much sympathy for the two-state solution in the American

Jewish community. A 2007 survey found that only 46 percent of Jews in this county favored the establishment of a Palestinian state, probably because 82 percent of those surveyed believed that "the goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories but rather the destruction of Israel." A 2008 J Street poll showed more support for the two-state solution (78 percent) but also revealed substantial opposition to dismantling Israeli settlements and making East Jerusalem part of Palestine. Those reservations, coupled with deep-seated fears of Palestinian motives, will help the lobby's hardliners make their case. Of course, Christian Zionists will adamantly oppose the two-state solution: they want Israel to control every square millimeter of Palestine because they believe that will facilitate Christ's Second Coming.

Obama's only hope—and it is a slim one—is that a substantial part of the American Jewish community will come to understand Olmert's warning that Israel will become like white-ruled South Africa if there is no two-state solution. More American Jews need to understand that Israel is in serious peril and that the situation is likely to get worse, not better. Obama would be acting as Israel's friend if he put pressure on both sides to reach a settlement. If there is no agreement, Israel faces a grim future, and it will become very difficult to defend Israel. In short, more Jewish-Americans need to recognize that it is in their interest to champion the two-state solution.

If that does not happen, Obama will be unable to get tough with Israel. There will be even more trouble ahead for Israel, the United States, and especially the Palestinians. ■

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Becoming Barbarians

Hungry, rootless, and revolutionary, the Right has adopted the habits of the horde.

By Rod Dreher

PERHAPS IT'S A MEASURE of the depths of my cultural pessimism, but when I take a sounding of the conservative predicament these days, I find myself not asking, "What would Reagan do?" but rather "What would Benedict do?" Benedict of Nursia, I mean, the 5th-century founder of Western monasticism, the man most responsible for preserving European Christian culture through the Dark Ages.

The Catholic philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre famously ended his landmark 1982 book *After Virtue* with a gloomy meditation about the collapse of a common moral sense in the West. He suggested that we were too far gone into nihilism and relativism to save and that those devoted to the traditional virtues should consider hiving off, as Benedict and his followers did in Rome's final days, to build communities that can withstand the incoming tide of chaos and despond. MacIntyre wrote that our unawareness of how lost we are "constitutes part of our predicament," one that can only be adequately addressed by "another—and doubtless very different—St. Benedict."

What could that mean for conservatives today? That we should consider what I've come to call the "Benedict Option"—that is, pioneering forms of dropping out of a barbaric mainstream culture that has grown hostile to our fundamental values. The case for traditional conservatives to make a strategic retreat to defensible perimeters, so to

speak, has become even more appealing since 1999, when Paul Weyrich issued his famous *fin de siècle* call for conservatives to pull back radically from "a [cultural] collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics."

The barbarians are upon us! That's what I told an audience not long ago in a speech in Austin, Texas. The next day, I drove home to Dallas, went to bed, and had a dream that has haunted me since.

In the dream, I was covering an international economic crisis summit in Belgium. I spied, walking through a town square at sundown, the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy. I knew somehow that it was he, though I'd never read his work, nor seen his photograph. All I knew of Cavafy, who died in 1933, was that he had once written a poem about barbarians. I rushed to his side, notepad in hand, seeking his advice about how to deal with the new Dark Age.

He smiled and gestured kindly to me to pay attention to the bells ringing inside the tower of the large church in front of us. The sound of the bells calling worshippers to vespers turned into the harmonious lowing of cattle. (It was, recall, a dream). I told the poet that was interesting, but I wanted him to tell my readers what we should do about the barbarians.

Again he smiled and walked me to an open window in a nearby building. On the sill was a bottle of locally brewed beer. The poet took it in his hands, caressed it, and patiently explained the particular qualities of this beer, its label

and its bottle and how it was actually a marvelous artifact of this particular place. That's nice, I told him, but what should we do about the barbarians?

Then several admirers recognized Cavafy, running to him for autographs. Frustrated, I stepped back and waited for them to go away. Then my alarm clock rang.

Before I poured my morning coffee, I logged onto the Internet, typed in "Cavafy" and "barbarians." There appeared a 1904 poem titled "Waiting for the Barbarians," in Edmund Keeley's translation. The poem describes an imperial city making preparation for the arrival of barbarians. The atmosphere is one of relief from boredom and meaninglessness. When evening comes and word reaches the city that perhaps there are no barbarians, the people disperse anxiously. The poem's final lines:

And now, what's going to happen
to us without barbarians?

They were, those people, a kind of
solution.

I must confess, upon first reading, the poem struck me as a rebuke. Do I have a need to believe in the imminent arrival of the barbarians to avoid the hard, tedious, and not especially rewarding work of trying to come up with a livable conservatism in the present uncongenial age? If so, the Benedict Option is really the Benedict Temptation—Romantic escapism masquerading as monastic-tinged cultural survivalism.

Trouble is, MacIntyre really is right, and so was Weyrich. From a traditionalist perspective, we truly are living through an astonishing, and astonishingly rapid, cultural collapse, living as free riders on the residual vestiges of Christianity. How do you argue persuasively for a politics based on traditional virtue in a therapeutic postmodern capitalist culture where individual autonomy—especially in matters sexual and economic—is widely considered the highest good?

Besides, the Cavafy dream had particularly interesting details. Twice I had asked the poet for a political program, and twice he had drawn my attention instead to the contemplation of ordinary things in front of us. He directed me to listen to the church bells and to observe how they sounded like the lowing of cattle. Then when I persisted, he forced me to be still and contemplate how a simple bottle of beer was an icon through which one could understand the agrarian roots of this place where we stood. I still did not understand and remained frustrated at the poet's refusal to play my right-wing pundit's game.

What was wrong with me in that dream? I was behaving like the kind of conservative Claes G. Ryn once condemned in a *TAC* essay, disdaining poets and artists as "flaky" because they are unconcerned with politics and economics. Ryn criticized the failure of contemporary conservatives to grasp that

Traditional civilization is threatened with extinction because pleasing but destructive illusions have become part of the way in which most people view the world and their own lives. The hold on society of those who created and fed these illusions cannot be broken mainly through practical politics.

Ryn goes on:

What is most needed is a reorientation of mind and imagination. The great illusions of our age must be exposed for what they are so that they will start to lose their appeal. This can be done only through art and thought of a different quality.

Was that not what the poet in the dream was trying to show me? That my frantic concern about the barbarians, and what was to be done about the catastrophe we were living through, was distracting me from the kind of thought that could truly renew and restore a culture lost to itself?

Conservatives have worked so hard over the past few decades to fight for civilized standards against a short checklist of modern barbarisms—abortion, gay marriage, political correctness, and so forth. What we failed to consider was that we had become barbarians ourselves.

WE HAVE REDUCED OURSELVES TO **SNEERING AT THE CONCEPT OF ELITISM AND CELEBRATING IGNORANCE AND VULGARITY** AS SIGNS OF AUTHENTICITY.

The barbarians of the Roman era wandered and marauded aimlessly. We accepted rootlessness as the modern condition. We defended our unrestrained consumer appetites by spiting those who would counsel limits as freedom's enemies. Despisers of communism, we worshiped capitalism, naïve to its revolutionary power to dissolve bonds we ought to have cherished and things we ought to have conserved. Though we like to think of ourselves as apostles of excellence preaching against the depredations of Hollywood trash and academia's political correctness, we have reduced ourselves to sneering at the concept of elitism and celebrating ignorance and vulgarity as signs of authenticity.

We cast aside the sense of temperamental modesty, of restraint and of fidelity to honorable traditions that have been conservatism's philosophical patrimony, and exchanged it for a pot of ideological message. When MacIntyre wrote that the barbarians "have already been governing us for quite some time," he didn't mean the Democrats alone.

Walker Percy once wrote of the modern novelist's sense that "the happy exurb stands both in danger of catastrophe and somehow in need of it." Sometimes, it takes a catastrophe to make us come to ourselves, to see the world in a new and more truthful way. The political catastrophe the Republicans are living through, and the far more consequential cultural catastrophe we're all enduring, obviously call for fresh political and economic thinking. But even more, they call for a renewal of our moral and spiritual vision. We have to learn to retreat from the passions of the moment, making use

of this gift of catastrophe to enter into contemplation and draw once again "from the moral and spiritual depths" (Ryn) of the sound of church bells calling the faithful to evening prayer, the cattle lowing in the fields, the cold beer on the village square in the twilight of a world that, as Russell Kirk said, "remains sunlit despite its vices."

What else is there? Another gathering of the CPAC tribe? Fox News every night? More Vandals vs. Visigoths derailing-do on Capitol Hill? ■

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To Die For a Mystique

The lessons our leaders didn't learn from the Vietnam War

By Andrew J. Bacevich

IN ONE OF THE MOST thoughtful Vietnam-era accounts written by a senior military officer, Gen. Bruce Palmer once observed, "With respect to Vietnam, our leaders should have known that the American people would not stand still for a protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment."

General Palmer thereby distilled into a single sentence the central lesson of Vietnam: to embark upon an open-ended war lacking clearly defined and achievable objectives was to forfeit public support, thereby courting disaster. The implications were clear: never again.

Palmer's book, which he titled *The Twenty-Five Year War*, appeared in 1984. Today, exactly 25 years later, we once again find ourselves mired in a "protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U. S. commitment." It's déjà vu all over again. How to explain this astonishing turn of events?

In the wake of Vietnam, the officer corps set out to preclude any recurrence of protracted, indeterminate conflict. The Armed Forces developed a new American way of war, emphasizing advanced technology and superior skills. The generals were by no means keen to put these new methods to the test: their preference was for wars to be fought infrequently and then only in pursuit of genuinely vital interests. Yet when war did come, they intended to dispatch any adversary promptly and economically, thereby protecting the military from the possibility of public

abandonment. Finish the job quickly and go home: this defined the new paradigm to which the lessons of Vietnam had given rise.

In 1991, Operation Desert Storm seemingly validated that paradigm. Yet events since 9/11, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, have now demolished it. Once again, as in Vietnam, the enemy calls the tune, obliging American soldiers to fight on his terms. Decision has become elusive. Costs skyrocket and are ignored. The fighting drags on. As it does so, the overall purpose of the undertaking—other than of avoiding the humiliation of abject failure—becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

The dirty little secret to which few in Washington will own up is that the United States now faces the prospect of perpetual conflict. We find ourselves in the midst of what the Pentagon calls the "Long War," a conflict global in scope (if largely concentrated in the Greater Middle East) and expected to outlast even General Palmer's "Twenty-Five Year War." The present generation of senior civilians and officers have either forgotten or inverted the lessons of Vietnam, embracing open-ended war as an inescapable reality.

To apply to the Long War the plaintive query that Gen. David Petraeus once posed with regard to Iraq—"Tell me how this ends"—the answer is clear: no one has the foggiest idea. War has become like the changing phases of the moon. It's part of everyday existence. For American soldiers there is no end in sight.

Yet there is one notable difference between today and the last time the United States found itself mired in a seemingly endless war. During the Vietnam era, even as some young Americans headed off to Indochina to fight in the jungles and rice paddies, many other young Americans back on the home front fought against the war itself. More than any other event of the 1960s, the war created a climate of intense political engagement. Today, in contrast, the civilian contemporaries of those fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have largely tuned out the Long War. The predominant mood of the country is not one of anger or anxiety but of dull acceptance. Vietnam divided Americans; the Long War has rendered them inert.

To cite General Palmer's formulation, the citizens of this country at present do appear willing to "stand still" when considering the prospect of war that goes on and on. While there are many explanations for why Americans have disengaged from the Long War, the most important, in my view, is that so few of us have any immediate personal stake in that conflict.

When the citizen-soldier tradition collapsed under the weight of Vietnam, the military rebuilt itself as a professional force. The creation of this all-volunteer military was widely hailed as a great success—well-trained and highly motivated soldiers made the new American way of war work. Only now are we beginning to glimpse the shortcomings of this arrangement, chief among them the fact

that today's "standing army" exists at considerable remove from the society it purports to defend. Americans today profess to "support the troops" but that support is a mile wide and an inch deep. It rarely translates into serious or sustained public concern about whether those same troops are being used wisely and well.

The upshot is that with the eighth anniversary of the Long War upon us, fundamental questions about this enterprise remain unasked. The contrast with Vietnam is striking: back then the core questions may not have gotten straight answers, but at least they got posed.

When testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 1971, the young John Kerry famously—or infamously, in the eyes of some—asked, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

What exactly was that mistake? Well, there were many. Yet the most fundamental lay in President Johnson's erroneous conviction that the Republic of Vietnam constituted a vital American security interest and that ensuring that country's survival required direct and massive U.S. military intervention.

Johnson erred in his estimation of South Vietnam's importance. He compounded that error with a tragic failure of imagination, persuading himself that once in, there was no way out. The United States needed to stay the course in Vietnam, regardless of the cost or consequences.

Now we are, in our own day and in our own way, repeating LBJ's errors. In his 1971 Senate testimony, reflecting the views of other Vietnam veterans who had turned against the war in which they had fought, Kerry derisively remarked, "we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism."

The larger struggle against communism commonly referred to as the Cold

War was both just and necessary. Yet the furies evoked by irresponsible (or cowardly) politicians more interested in partisan advantage than in advancing the common good transformed the Cold War from an enterprise governed by reason into one driven by fear. Beginning with McCarthyism and the post-1945 Red Scare and continuing on through phantasms such as the domino theory, bomber gap, missile gap, and the putative threat to our survival posed by a two-bit Cuban revolutionary, panic induced policies that were reckless, wrong-headed, and unnecessary, with Vietnam being just one particularly egregious example.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION MAY HAVE **BANISHED THE PHRASE "GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR,"** YET THE **CONVICTION PERSISTS** THAT THE UNITED STATES IS CALLED UPON TO **TRANSFORM THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST.**

The mystical war against communism finds its counterpart in the mystical war on terrorism. As in the 1960s, so too today: mystification breeds misunderstanding and misjudgment. It prevents us from seeing things as they are.

As a direct result, it leads us to exaggerate the importance of places like Afghanistan and indeed to exaggerate the jihadist threat, which falls well short of being existential. It induces flights of fancy so that otherwise sensible people conjure up visions of providing clean water, functioning schools, and good governance to Afghanistan's 40,000 villages, with expectations of thereby winning Afghan hearts and minds. It causes people to ignore considerations of cost. With the Long War already this nation's second most expensive conflict, trailing only World War II, and with the federal government projecting trillion-dollar deficits for years to come, how much can we

afford and where is the money coming from?

For political reasons the Obama administration may have banished the phrase "global war on terror," yet the conviction persists that the United States is called upon to dominate or liberate or transform the Greater Middle East. Methods may be shifting, with the emphasis on pacification giving way to militarized nation-building. Priorities may be changing, Af-Pak now supplanting Iraq as the main effort. But by whatever name, the larger enterprise continues. The president who vows to "change the way Washington works" has not yet exhibited the imagination needed to

conceive of an alternative to the project that his predecessor began.

The urgent need is to de-mystify that project, which was from the outset a misguided one. Just as in the 1960s we possessed neither the wisdom nor the means needed to determine the fate of Southeast Asia, so today we possess neither the wisdom nor the means necessary to determine the fate of the Greater Middle East. To persist in efforts to do so—as the Obama administration appears intent on doing in Afghanistan—will simply replicate on an even greater scale mistakes like those that Bruce Palmer and John Kerry once rightly decried. ■

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Not Good as Gold

The case against global currency schemes, whether Chinese or American

By David Gordon

LATE LAST MARCH, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner stunned world financial markets by stating that the U.S. is “quite open” to Chinese proposals to replace the dollar as the primary world reserve currency. In the Chinese proposal, a “super-sovereign reserve currency” would be run by the International Monetary Fund. Geithner’s remarks instantly caused the dollar to plunge against the Chinese RMB. The Treasury secretary had to retreat. He stated that he expected the dollar to remain the world’s dominant reserve currency for “a long period of time,” and even the Chinese officials claimed that their proposal was only intended for some indefinite future.

What was all the fuss about? To understand the controversy, one must first grasp a paradoxical fact. Suppose that you buy a cup of coffee at Starbucks. How does it happen that you get an actual good, a cup of coffee, for a piece of paper with some writing on it? We take this for granted, but isn’t it odd? After all, if I were to offer in payment a piece of paper with my name written on it, I would hardly meet with success. Why is government paper different?

Dollars, unlike the paper of my example, are backed by the United States government. But this does not resolve our problem. In the days of the gold standard, a dollar was indeed backed by a certain quantity of a real commodity. You could, if so minded, receive gold for your dollar. Now, though, there is nothing behind dollars. So why does presenting pieces of paper enable you to secure goods?

People accept these pieces of paper because they know, or at least have good

reason to think, that everyone else will do so as well. The person who accepts your dollars in payment knows that he can use them to acquire goods and services that he wants. This system rests entirely on confidence: if people stopped believing that everyone would accept dollars, the entire system would collapse.

But it is not as though everything is right so long as people think that others will not reject dollars. Money, like all other goods, has a price, determined by supply and demand. An increase in the quantity of paper money reduces its value. If people think that the government is going to inflate the money supply, they value units of money less than before, and prices soar.

The matter is complicated, though not in essence changed, by the fact that most money today is not even paper. Rather, it is credit, issued by banks and other financial institutions. This credit does have something backing it up: it can be redeemed for dollars. But banks do not limit themselves to their deposits of dollars on hand; to the contrary, the amount of credit issued far exceeds what could be redeemed at one time. If people lose confidence in the system, a panic can rapidly ensue. After a collapse of credit, the dollar is in trouble as well.

Here Chinese complaints about the dollar as a reserve currency enter the scene. If I wanted to buy coffee at a Chinese Starbucks, I could not pay in dollars. I would first have to exchange my dollars for Chinese RMB. This presents no problem for a simple transaction, but matters are different for large-scale world markets in commodities like oil.

Here it is obviously convenient for a country to have on hand not only its own money but other currencies as well.

A country will wish to hold money that other countries accept. Normally countries converge on one, or at most a few, monies as their main holding. If most countries want to hold large amounts of the same country’s money, that becomes the world’s dominant reserve currency.

The Chinese claim that because of reckless American financial policy, the world has lost confidence in the dollar. It would thus be better to shift to a world money, which all countries would accept. Are they right? Should we accede to the Chinese suggestions? Or should we try to hang on to our position?

When the world operates with paper money, there seem to be advantages if our dollar is the world’s reserve currency. Ordinarily, a country’s central bank faces sharp limits to a policy of monetary expansion. If a country expands its currency, other countries will not want to hold its reserves of that money. Its currency is devalued against less expansionist monetary systems.

Matters differ with a country whose currency is dominant. Because other countries find it convenient to hold this currency, they are reluctant to rid themselves of it, despite inflation. The dominant country thus has much leeway to conduct an expansionary policy. As economist Jeffrey Herbener has noted, “Without the fetter of gold reserves and redemption commitments of dollars for gold binding it, the Fed has no objective constraint in determining the rate of dollar inflation.”

The alleged advantages do not stop here. America can run up a huge balance of payments deficit. This situation differs from a mere trade deficit, in which we buy more goods and services than we sell. In a balance of payments deficit for a particular country, all American items for sale, including financial assets, are less than what we want to purchase from that country. In this circumstance, our currency will lose value, but because the other country still wants to hold American dollars in reserve, we can continue to have such deficits much longer than any other country could.

These advantages come at a price. If another country wants to expand its monetary reach, the pressures of the system inhibit it from doing so. But it may defy these pressures and expand anyway. In that case, there may be disastrous consequences for us. As Herbener explains,

A rogue nation will be tempted to defend its currency, and stave off devaluation, by spending its dollar reserves. Any significant disgorging of dollars would threaten to ignite price inflation in America if the dollars were repatriated. Significant domestic price inflation would, at best, bring a repeat of the 1970s, and, at worst, a hyperinflation.

The chances of collapse increase drastically if countries lose confidence in the dollar. Then the process to which Herbener has called attention would be greatly intensified, as all other countries endeavored to spend their dollars.

What should we do? One answer would be to weigh the advantages of remaining the world's reserve currency against the dangers. Are the benefits of being able to inflate more than other countries and running up huge balance of payment deficits worth the chance that foreign pressures might ruin our monetary system?

Surely, though, this is the wrong approach. Far from being an advantage, the ability to expand the money supply more than other countries is a grave liability. What happens when we expand the money supply? As Austrian school economists, notably Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray N. Rothbard, have explained, an expansion of bank credit will drive the money rate of interest below the "natural" rate, largely determined by people's preference for present over future goods. When business people see that money is available at low interest, they will expand production. But the money rate of interest rises after the expansion ceases, because people's actual preferences for present goods over future goods have not decreased. The businesses that expanded based on these lower rates now must liquidate their enterprises. This liquidation is what constitutes a recession or depression. Our present financial crisis is a prime example.

Unless we want continued depressions, we should reject the supposed benefits of retaining dollars as the world's reserve currency. But the solution does not rest in adoption of the Chinese proposal of a world monetary system. If inflation by one country is bad, how would shifting to a system that allows global inflation improve matters? If, under a new arrangement, the IMF embarked on inflation, nothing could stop it. The result might be a depression of unparalleled magnitude.

We seem caught in a quandary. The present system has little to be said for it, but the replacement would only worsen matters. Fortunately, a solution lies at hand: take money out of the control of the state.

The idea is no mere theoretical velleity dreamed up by free-market extremists. Under the classical gold standard, money was a commodity: its supply was not determined by government fiat but

was a quantity of physical material, and that worked very well in the 19th century. A return to this system would be no simple matter, but this salutary reform could be accomplished.

Rothbard's proposal, explained in *The Mystery of Banking*, would define the gold content of the dollar so that the government's gold reserves would equal the sum of Federal Reserve notes and demand deposits. That done, all gold reserves would be distributed to the banks, enabling them to cover their existing obligations. Banks, now solvent, would no longer be allowed to issue money in excess of deposits on hand. They could issue bank notes to supply the public's demand for paper money, but these notes would be backed by gold: fractional reserve banking would no longer exist. No purpose would then remain for the Federal Reserve System.

Rothbard's idea must confront an important objection. Once we converted to the gold standard, the money supply could then expand only through new gold mining. But does not a growing economy require constantly increasing money? Without such inflation, we face the menace of deflation. Ben Bernanke becomes almost apoplectic when the word is mentioned. But what is so bad about lower prices? So long as prices are flexible, a growing economy does not require more money: any quantity would be adequate. Decreasing prices and economic growth often go together.

Ron Paul has been the foremost champion in American political life of the gold standard. We would be well advised to turn a deaf ear to Geithner and Bernanke and embrace Paul's sound common sense. ■

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In His Sights

Will the Obama administration come for your guns?

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

NO ONE REALLY expects business to increase 60 percent in a worldwide economic crisis. Unless, of course, you own a firearms store, online ammo shop, or lease a booth at the regional gun show, in which case business is exploding.

Brad DeSaye's family has been selling guns and ammo since 1946, when his father Joe opened J&G Rifle Ranch in Montana. The business moved in 1977 to Prescott, Arizona, renaming itself J&G Sales. Specializing in guns and ammo for "sportsmen, law enforcement and firearms enthusiasts," J&G has thrived through multiple wars, recessions, and national panics. But sales have never been as high as they are at the moment, DeSaye says. "Business is probably triple more than normal," he tells *TAC*. "It's unprecedented."

He's hardly the exception. Boxes of ammunition of all calibers are reportedly flying off the shelves at double, even triple the normal price in neighborhood mom-and-pops, Wal-Marts, and at gun shows across the country. Big online dealers like Texas-based Cheaper Than Dirt are ordering millions of rounds at a time and slamming up against back-orders of six to eight months.

Meanwhile, Dave Hardy, who blogs at *armsandthelaw.com*, reports that gun shows are becoming surreal. "The last gun show I went to, ammo prices were close to double what they were six months ago," he says. "I saw three or four people enter with moving dollies, using them to haul out a load of ammo too heavy to carry. I have never seen that before, and I've been attending gun shows since the mid-1970s."

Firearms, especially semi-automatics and handguns, are in high demand. Longtime gun owners are said to be "stockpiling," while another demographic, the rookie, is beginning to make his mark. Ted Novin, spokesman for the National Shooting Sports Foundation, said the organization's introductory gun-safety classes are seeing "an unprecedented level" of attendance. "One of our courses is called 'First Shots'—it's jam-packed," he says.

From November through to March, the number of FBI background checks administered when someone purchases a gun jumped 29 percent to 3.8 million, compared to the same period last year. A survey by industry researcher SportsOneSource found that firearm sales by large retailers such as Wal-Mart are up 39 percent this year.

An unparalleled confluence of events seems to have triggered this run on firearms supplies. The hottest flashpoint by far was the November election, when a largely unknown liberal from Chicago won the presidency, and the Democratic Congress, led by gun-control advocates, emerged with an even more formidable, bulletproof majority.

"I think it's a reasonable reaction," Novin says of the sales spike. "This demonstrates that gun owners are determined to exercise their individual, constitutionally protected, Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms, safely and responsibly."

President Obama has said repeatedly that he supports the Second Amendment. But skeptical gun-rights activists point to his record in the Illinois State

Senate as proof that he would much prefer a world in which only the government has guns. "Obama has a history of supporting a ban on handguns," says Jeff Soyer, a pro-gun blogger who lives in Vermont. "The result has been a run on all types of firearms."

Although the president denies supporting such a move, he did vote to impose strict gun laws as a state senator between 1997 and 2004, including a bill that would limit handgun sales to individuals to one per month and allow victims of handgun violence to sue gun manufacturers. He has also suggested that only police should have the right to carry concealed weapons and that the federal government should raise taxes on firearms and ammo by 500 percent.

In addition to the president, a number of Democrats, including Attorney General Eric Holder and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have said that they support the reinstatement of the Clinton-era ban on so-called assault weapons. But these politicians recognize that the political winds for gun control aren't blowing in their favor.

Still, gun advocates are not feeling comfortable. They warily read former president Jimmy Carter's recent *New York Times* op-ed pleading that the White House and Congress "not give up on trying to reinstate a ban on assault weapons." They do not discount another Democratic rally against the "gun-show loophole," through which some states still allow unlicensed dealers to sell firearms at shows. They see Obama's pledge to work with Mexico on international gun-running as an ominous sign.

There are more than 20 firearms-related bills pending in the House and at least seven in the Senate. Not all of these measures should be construed as anti-gun, yet fear remains among gun enthusiasts that, when the time is right, the new administration will pounce.

"[Obama] has surrounded himself with people who are not only extreme gun-control supporters, but they have been key leaders in that movement," says Dave Kopel, a gun-policy expert with the Colorado-based Independence Institute. "I think people are right to be concerned."

Yet the Carter and Clinton administrations—the latter saw a "Million Mom March" against guns—and the 2006 Democratic takeover of Congress also prompted nervous gun-buying sprees and no doubt generated profitable waves of political activity for the National Rifle Association and conservative grassroots.

Today is different, however, not only for the sheer volume of merchandise moving across the market but because the latest bout of gun buying is motivated by a larger uncertainty about the future. "There is a desperation to it," says DeSaye, whose business experienced booms following the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban (it expired in 2004), the millennium freak-out over Y2K, and what he gauges as a yearlong survivalist period after 9/11. "This is far bigger than any of the others," he insists. "There is an unknown out there."

That "unknown" is a sense that Washington and Wall Street are completely clueless about how to fix the derailed economy. No one has any idea how long this recession will last or, more darkly, whether government institutions will survive its nebulous passage.

"I grew up in a liberal Democratic family from New York City and never thought I'd ever own a gun," says David, a white middle-aged man from Northern

Virginia working on contract for the U.S. Army, who asked that his full name not be used. A dedicated Republican, he eschewed gun ownership until the November election. Now he owns a Ruger .357 Magnum revolver and a Mossberg 500 shotgun. In late 2008, his concerns about the new president, the economy, and a fear of crime led him to his first gun show. "I wanted to be able to defend myself and my home," he says. He felt that the new administration would later restrict his rights.

"There are a lot of people who think this house of cards is going to collapse," explains DeSaye. "A growing sense that the end is coming and I'd better be prepared."

Combined with right-wing fears of a socialist wealth grab and the apocalyptic bombast delivered by emerging media icons like Glenn Beck—who told his Fox audience in February that "depression and revolution" were coming—you have what some are already calling a panic. It's the infamous Toilet Paper Effect, which refers, of course, to the hysterical reaction to the late Johnny Carson's gag about a looming toilet paper shortage on Dec. 19, 1973. A day later, not a roll was left on the shelves.

Great comedic fare, but it's not so funny when weapons are the punchline. Carson might have had 20 million television viewers, but today the blogosphere can set off a run on a specific brand of ammo overnight with a few well-placed chat room posts about backorders—what DeSaye calls "a real feeding frenzy."

There are sounder, less sexy reasons for the short supply. Some say growing consumption of raw materials like brass, copper, and lead by India and China over the last four years has driven up the price of producing ammo. Others point out that new Homeland Security rules requiring 100 percent inspection of all

aircraft cargo have delayed shipments and increased costs.

Add to this the huge demands of the U.S. military since 2003. In 2007, the Associated Press reported that troops training for and fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan were consuming more than 1 billion bullets a year, "contributing to ammunition shortages hitting police departments nationwide and preventing some officers from training with the weapons they carry on patrol."

Yet activists like Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America insist that shortages have more to do with a "getting it while you can" ethos, a reflection of the political climate and a heightened fear for safety. "Folks are getting the message. They are literally waiting for the ammo to come into a store, and when it comes in—whack—they leave with their arms full."

While easily dismissed by many Americans as paranoid and partisan, such frenzied consumption betrays a broader, more pernicious anxiety—a realization that within a generation individuals have ceded too much control of their lives to the state. The 9/11 attacks stimulated the enactment of sweeping new law-enforcement powers, while the White House was given *carte blanche* to push its prerogatives to the limit.

Gun restrictions may not be politically expedient now, but just one major violent event in the U.S.—perhaps another case of a man shooting his entire family because he's mired in debt—could set in motion a raft of even tighter controls on the constitutional right to bear arms.

Under the Bush administration, the Left bristled about the onset of a tyrannical government. Now gun owners on the Right are awaking to the same fear. ■

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance reporter.

Beyond the Paleos

Fixing conservatism without adding a prefix

By W. James Antle III

ARLEN SPECTER began the month of April insisting that it was important to keep the Democrats from achieving a 60-vote majority in the Senate. "The only check and balance on the Democratic sweep with the White House and the House is 41 of us in the Senate," he told *The American Spectator*. "Because if [Pat] Toomey is the Republican nominee and my seat goes, the Democrats get 60 votes." Specter ended the month by switching parties and paving the way for that 60th Democratic vote.

His hasty departure from the GOP is a good reminder that most arguments made by politicians are based on electoral self-interest. But the reaction to Specter's flip also revealed the poverty of the debate among Republicans as to how they can start winning again. Some Republican-friendly commentators treated the Specter switch as an occasion to rebuke conservatives for their partisan disloyalty. Others took the opportunity to assure us that, whatever the election results may say, all is well with the Republican Party.

"The Specter defection is too severe a catastrophe to qualify as a 'wake-up call,'" wrote David Frum. "His defection is the thing we needed the wake-up call to warn us against!" Other posters at his website complained of Republican purges. *Commentary's* John Podhoretz, while allowing that Pennsylvania's newest Democratic senator is a "snake of the highest order," called the conservative campaign against Specter "the most self-destructive act in modern political history."

Not to be outdone, the anti-Specter conservatives shouted good riddance. Sean Hannity told his viewers that Specter's new party affiliation "makes no difference." Rush Limbaugh cheekily advised Specter to take John McCain with him. Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), one of the most active and respected conservative legislators on Capitol Hill, declared, "I would rather have 30 Republicans in the Senate who really believe in principles of limited government, free markets, free people, than to have 60 that don't have a set of beliefs."

Obviously, there is a lot of ground between these two extremes. In politics, you often have to accept imperfect allies. But a political movement that aspires to something greater than holding power for power's sake cannot subordinate all its goals to the whims of its least reliable allies. Understood properly, the loss of Specter at this moment is unfortunate because it further diminishes conservatives' already severely limited leverage in Washington. A Specter-free Republican Party is not, however, a great tragedy for conservatism.

The Specter flap has also shown that the debate over the Republican future is largely taking place between two camps. One group says that Republicans should imitate the Democrats' success by imitating Democratic positions, with the non-negotiable exceptions of raising the top marginal income tax rate and pulling out of Iraq. Do whatever needs to be done to keep Arlen Specter and Lincoln Chafee happily affiliated with the

GOP so that we can hang on to enough seats to maybe block a Democratic-sponsored bill someday. Such bold strategic thinking.

On the other side of this debate is a group that in effect maintains that there is nothing wrong with the Republican Party that a 2012 Sarah Palin/Joe the Plumber ticket couldn't fix. If George W. Bush and the Republican Congress hadn't spent so much money, especially on those blasted earmarks, conservatives would still be in power. The way back to the Promised Land is to say what Bush said in 2004 even louder and to recruit candidates proficient in Beltway conservative think-tank white papers—especially in the blue states.

Pat Toomey is a smart man who capably represented a swing district in Pennsylvania for four terms. But he and many of the candidates supported by the Club for Growth when he was its president agree with the second assessment of the Republican Party's fortunes. Arlen Specter is the dream candidate of those who prefer the first: an economic and social liberal who is only reliably Republican on issues pertaining to war and civil liberties. That Toomey is considered the underdog and Specter is reduced to desperation moves to keep a Senate seat he's held for five terms should tell us something about these two approaches.

Fortunately, there is a third option. There is a flavor of conservatism that has not been discredited by the events of the past eight years. If anything, its criticisms of loose monetary policies, overcon-

sumption, reckless private and public borrowing, uncontrolled immigration, and foreign adventurism now seem prescient. It is a conservatism unburdened by the Iraq War, the “heckuva job” response to Hurricane Katrina, and the financial meltdown, which are really the biggest contributors to the GOP’s decline. Most of all, it is a conservatism that does not need to rehabilitate the Bush legacy since its leading exponents were never full-time Bush apologists.

An objection is likely to enter even the minds of sympathetic readers. This sounds a lot like paleoconservatism, whose adherents are too quirky, too cantankerous, and too small in number to put together an effective political movement. But we needn’t call it “paleo” anything. It’s the ideas that matter. Not so long ago a platform along these lines—limited government, decentralism, a national interest-based foreign policy, and resistance to multiculturalism—would have been considered conservatism without the prefix. And is it really that outlandish compared to the leading alternatives? Right now, Republicans are arguing about whether they want to remain the party that is in the minority now or go back to being the party that was in the minority for decades after the New Deal.

Moreover, a conservative political movement can be informed by certain paleo-friendly insights without reducing itself to a debating society on the relative merits of Bill Bennett versus Mel Bradford. Austrian economics has some things to say about the current financial crisis that mainstream economic theories, Left and Right, do not. Restrictionists have valuable observations about our immigration policy. And in today’s world, there is a great case to be made for a strong American military used sparingly.

Such a new old-fashioned conservatism agrees with the Limbaugh listeners that the Republican Party lost its

way on spending without pretending that the Bridge to Nowhere was a bigger liability than Iraq. It agrees with the Frum followers that there are fundamental problems with the Republican brand without repudiating conservatism. Best of all, it addresses head-on the main reason for the recent GOP electoral debacles.

Republicans are in trouble because a majority of Americans view George W. Bush as a failed president. There is simply no other credible explanation for the party’s dramatic drop-off from 2004 to 2006. Worse, the strategies that helped Bush eke out narrow, short-term victories have hurt the Republican Party over the long term. Treating social conservatism as a form of identity politics was supposed to help the party win evangelical votes without alienating moderates. It has instead inflamed feelings between these groups. Amnesty for illegal immigrants was supposed to appeal to Hispanic voters. Instead it set up a debate that pitted them against the bulk of the Republican base. Tax cuts combined with spending increases were supposed to be all gain, no pain. Instead they discredited Republican economic arguments.

The GOP has angered its true believers by being unprincipled and has alienated nonideological voters by seeming hypocritical, tone-deaf, and incompetent. The trap the party has set for itself is that whatever addresses one problem only makes the other worse. A potential way out is to appeal to the center with style and the Right with substance. Ron Paul was able to win liberal esteem despite opposing abortion and holding views about government that made Barry Goldwater look like Nelson Rockefeller. Perhaps a more mainstream figure with greater credibility among Republicans could do better.

South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford is a strong possibility, though he may be too

conventional a Republican. Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson is another, though he might not be any more mainstream than Paul. Neither Sanford nor Johnson is personally charismatic. Any Republican who wishes to take up this mantle would have to study the Buchanan ’96 campaign. Pat Buchanan was able to connect with Limbaugh-listening conservatives on a visceral level in the 1990s. They overlooked his foreign-policy heterodoxy because he had been a Cold War stalwart and the Democrats were engaging in humanitarian interventions abroad. Besides, can a man who trades blows with Michael Kinsley every night really be soft on America’s enemies?

Every article like this one seems to suggest that the road to Republican victory can be paved by adopting the author’s political views. So let’s stipulate that a successful GOP candidacy along these lines would be more hawkish, more government-friendly, and less directly critical of Bush than I would prefer. The Federal Reserve and the personal income tax would survive the first 100 days. But a flinty, sober Republicanism, socially conservative but not preachy, pro-defense but not hyper-interventionist, could win in places where the GOP is losing, like New Hampshire and the Interior West.

A return to what the late Jack Kemp derided as “root-canal politics” is certainly risky, especially with Barack Obama promising a clean environment and affordable healthcare with no trade-offs or costs. Truth-telling conservatism could easily fall flat against a liberalism that tells voters only what they want to hear. It’s nevertheless a risk worth taking. Why? Because for the Republican Party, things can’t really get much worse. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Found Cause

Don't call me a conservative.

By Bill Kauffman

IN EDWARD ABBEY'S after-the-collapse novel *Good News*, Sam the Shaman tells the valiant anarchist cowboy Jack Burns, "There's one thing wrong with always fighting for freedom, and justice, and decency, and so forth."

"Only one thing?" replies Burns. "What's that?"

"You almost always lose."

In deference to Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* poet and anti-imperialist states-rights Democrat, I shan't quote Clarence Darrow's line about lost causes being the only ones worth fighting for. Masters had been Darrow's law partner, and he disdained the Chicago loudmouth as a headline-hogging welsher.

Still, there is the matter of the lostness of our cause. Peace, it seems, often passeth understanding.

Is *The American Conservative* a contrail in the sky of a dying America or the bright harbinger of revival—of a better, more humane Little America? I do not say this better America would be a more conservative America because for half a century, "conservative" has been a synonym of—a slave to—militarism, profligacy, the invasion of other nations, contempt for personal liberties, and an ignorance of and hostility toward provincial America that is Philip Rothian in its scope. The conservative movement, like the empire whose adjunct and cheerleader it is, is a daisy chain of epicene dissemblers and vampiric chickenhawks who feast on the carrion of our Republic. The c-word is quite simply beyond reclamation. The anarchist founder of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Frank Chodorov, had

the right idea, even if it did contradict his pacifism: "Anyone who calls me a conservative gets a punch in the nose." If we have to play Name that Tendency I'd opt for Little American, front-porch republican, localist, decentralist, libertarian, or, to borrow Robert Frost's term, plain old Insubordinate American—anything but C! (With a nod to Shel Silverstein.)

Be not deceived that a few opportunistic Republicans who said absolutely nothing in defense of our America during the Bush octennium are now sending up false flags of state sovereignty and the Tenth Amendment. Their Contract with America doppelgangers pulled the same stunt a decade ago before signing on, without any apparent qualms, to the brutally consolidationist Bush-Cheney regime. Recall that Bob Dole carried a copy of the Tenth Amendment during his flaccid 1996 presidential campaign, presumably in the same pocket that held the pills he needed to gulp in order to entertain the gracious Liddy. If these people were anything other than cynical party hacks I would be enthusiastic, but for God's sake, Charlie Brown, how often does Lucy have to yank the football away before you wise up?

The national "conversation," to misuse that word, is and has been limited to beligerent neoconservatives and liberal imperialists for many years now. Ed Abbey's Jack Burns is sooner to wind up on a Department of Homeland Security watch list than he is on CNN. But so what? We dishonor our forebears if we whine that the rulers and their lackeys are nasty, tyrannical, and placeless. Of course they are—they're rulers and lackeys.

The great John Randolph once

explained his contumacy: "I found I might co-operate, or be an honest man. I have therefore opposed them and will oppose them." This is even truer today, though mere opposition is a debilitating condition for all but the most friendless crank. Standing athwart things is a good way to get neutered. Luckily, we are *for* things—a restoration of the Republic, the rebirth of citizenship, social and political life on a human scale, a peaceful America that minds its own damn business. These goals will confound those who mimic the attitudes (never the Beatitudes!) blared from the rectangular soul-stealer in the living room, but among those who think up their own notions and sign their own names, to borrow Edmund Wilson's phrase, we have company. Anyone who engages in authentic civil or social life—ref in a pickup basketball game, drummer in a cowpunk band, secretary of a ladies' study club, rhubarb-cutter in a community garden—is acting upon the healthy, voluntaristic, small-is-not-always-beautiful-but-at-least-it's-human impulses that animate the first, last, and best alternative to the empire.

Whether we ever get together politically remains an open question. Protest politics is mostly boring street theater overseen by puppet-master choreographers in service of the two parties. True dissenters who undertake national campaigns—Ron Paul, Ralph Nader—are mocked, libeled, or ignored. Words are stripped of their meaning, even inverted, so that a vote for change produces Joe Biden, and a cheer for family values brings forth Newt Gingrich. I used to be

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Il Divo*]

Italian Opera

By Steve Sailer

MOST MOVIE CRITICS are more concerned with film than with life, but my goal has been to help make movies, those pungent yet unreliable distillations of life, compelling for the reader who is more interested in the world than in cinema.

Consider “*Il Divo*,” a baroque stylized biopic about Giulio Andreotti, seven times prime minister of Italy in the 1972-92 era, then a perpetual defendant in murder and Mafia trials from 1993 to 2003. Paolo Sorrentino’s “*Il Divo*” is a film of aesthetic ambitions—the owlsh politician inhabits a De Chirico Italy of sinisterly empty arcaded streets—and some historical significance.

Still, the labyrinthine “*Il Divo*” would be impenetrable to any American who hasn’t read up on Italy’s lurid recent past. Andreotti’s rival, former prime minister Aldo Moro, was kidnapped and murdered by the Red Brigades, various Vatican-connected bankers died in fashions that would have amused the Borgias, a Masonic lodge served as a seeming government-in-waiting for a post-coup Italy, and brave magistrates investigating the Mafia were blown up.

Italian politics, with its constantly collapsing governments, strikes Americans as a joke. Yet the fundamental questions of Italy’s Cold War years were deady

serious: would the unruly joys of Italian daily life succumb to the grayness of a Communist state, the Cuban tragedy writ large? Just how many Machiavelian machinations in the name of saving Italy from the Reds could be borne?

We often heard in 2002 that the U.S. did such a wonderful job reforming Germany and Japan after World War II that we were bound to accomplish the same in Iraq. Unmentioned was the 1943 American invasion of western Sicily. Needing to keep civil order without tying up troops, we turned control over to local anti-Fascist men of respect, *Mafiosi* who had been lying low during Mussolini’s crackdown. It worked, but the blowback lasted 50 years. After the war, to keep Italy’s huge Communist Party out of power, the U.S. subsidized the Christian Democrats, who relied on Mafia get-out-the-vote capabilities in the south.

In the Anglo-American world, to label anything a “conspiracy theory” is to dismiss it out of hand. In Italy, by contrast, conspiracy theories are the default explanation for how the world works because conspiracies are the main mechanism by which politicians get done what little they do. In Italy, the political is personal. To understand historical events, you need to tease out the occluded connections among the players.

As “*Il Divo*” demonstrates, Italy needed to be led during those difficult decades by the least operatic politician imaginable and can only now afford to revert to more stereotypically Italian showboats such as Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Like a more cultivated, less bumptious version of the Daleys who have ruled Chicago for 41 of the last 54 years, *Il Divo* is not a diva. Andreotti doesn’t bluster from balconies nor even

bother to cut a stylish figure. He listens carefully, forgets nothing, and confines his own utterances to mordant witticisms. As portrayed by Toni Servillo of the recent Neapolitan mob movie “*Gomorrah*,” Andreotti is a thin, stoop-shouldered man who never talks with his hands. Telegraphing his introversion, he keeps his chin tucked to his sternum, his elbows tight to his ribs, and makes only the most primly clerical symmetrical gestures. Servillo’s characterization is reminiscent of Austin Powers’s nemesis, if only Dr. Evil were underplayed by Jack Benny.

Margaret Thatcher reminisced about Andreotti, “He seemed to have a positive aversion to principle, even a conviction that a man of principle was doomed to be a figure of fun.” “*Il Divo*’s” nightmarish depiction of Italian politics raises an unsettling point. In Andreotti’s defense, he at least was born into his system, while America is now led by a man who, with every opportunity in the world beckoning, carefully chose to make his career in our closest equivalent: Chicago politics.

Having been acquitted on a second appeal in the shooting of a journalist investigating Moro’s death and saved by the statute of limitations from conviction for his 1970s alliance with the Sicilian Mafia, Andreotti is still influential as a Life Senator at 90. The unflappable maestro commented on “*Il Divo*,” “I don’t agree with Sorrentino’s portrayal of me, but I understand he had to make certain dramatic choices to make it interesting; my real life is actually quite boring.” Unfortunately, an American would have to be as well-informed as Andreotti to make sense of “*Il Divo*.” ■

Unrated, but would be PG-13.

BOOKS

[Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy, Marcus Daniel, Oxford University Press, 400 pages]

Fighting Words

By Patrick Allitt

IT'S DIFFICULT FOR US to get into the frame of mind of Americans in the 1790s. We know that the Republic was going to endure for at least the next two centuries, but they didn't, and to many of them it seemed terribly vulnerable. Britain was still a military threat. The French Revolution was turning to terror, anarchy, and conquest. Worse still, the Whiskey Rebellion, breaking out when the Constitution was well short of its tenth birthday, threatened the nation with internal collapse, just as Shays' Rebellion had brought down the government under the Articles of Confederation a few years before. Rival political factions, Federalist and Republican, were growing stronger and more antagonistic, despite a widely shared belief that factions and parties were signs of moral decay. Anyone who today thinks of George Washington's presidency as a golden age should spend an hour or two leafing through Marcus Daniel's *Scandal and Civility*. A history of political journalism in the 1790s, it also offers a readable narrative of the decade's turbulent events and bitter disputes.

The six newspaper editors profiled by Daniel believed that the citizens of a republic should be well informed. A taste for news was in fact widespread in the generation that had lived through the upheavals of the 1770s and 1780s. Nearly all white Americans were literate, and even those who were not enjoyed listening to the news being read aloud in public places. In the early days of the Constitution, most newspapers struck a pose of editorial neutrality and concentrated on passing along a wide array of stories from

home and abroad. As the political temperature rose, however, these editors backed one or other of the new political parties. Their high-mindedness gave way to character assassination, gossip, and outright propaganda. By the late 1790s, journalism was coming into disrepute for its scurrility, its tendency to inflame partisan passions, and its poisoning of political life. As Daniel remarks, "the violence of the printed word often flowed off the page and into the streets, provoking verbal and physical assaults, duels, public demonstrations, and riots."

These editors were a colorful group, six workaholics who had to meet tight deadlines, write prolifically, know the financial and technical side of the printing business, brave recurrent yellow-fever epidemics in filthy cities, and risk arrest for sedition. They also had to maneuver in the shifting currents of national politics as they scrambled for government patronage. They had fascinating careers outside journalism, too. Philip Freneau (formerly James Madison's college roommate at Princeton) was as much a poet as an editor—he wrote thousands of lines of nationalist doggerel, energized by his hatred of the British and his love of the new Republic. Noah Webster is remembered today more as a language and spelling reformer than as an editor; he wrote America's first dictionary and believed that the American language ought to be purified of corrupt old English vestiges. Benjamin Franklin Bache, the favorite grandson of Benjamin Franklin, spent his formative years in France when the grand old man was America's ambassador there, and knew Paris better than New York or Philadelphia. William Duane, educated in Ireland and an important figure among English radicals, had spent ten years as a soldier and writer in Calcutta before being deported for criticizing the East India Company.

Those who took the Federalist side in the politics of the 1790s—Webster, John Fenno, and William Cobbett—argued for a strong central government, a powerful presidency, and sound financial institutions of the kind then being established by Alexander Hamilton, the first

secretary of the Treasury. Suspicious of democracy, they favored established religion, social hierarchy, and restraints on popular passions. Hamilton and John Adams often wrote pseudonymously in their pages, justifying their policies and rebutting opposition attacks. Adams also published under his own name, in Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, his *Discourses on Davila*, a tract on the hazards of democracy and equality.

By contrast, those who supported the Democratic Republicans, Freneau, Bache, and Duane, shared Thomas Jefferson's vision of a decentralized agrarian Republic, worried that a strong presidency might lead to a revival of monarchy, dreaded the rise of a new aristocracy, and applauded Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791). Freneau, convinced that the Federalists' economic policies would create inequalities of wealth, promoting luxury and corruption, urged his readers to "sweep the legislative floors of such vermin ... who devour liberty in the bud and suck the vitals of the honest industrious farmers, merchants, and tradesmen."

The prickly Cobbett, an immigrant from England, was the most gifted writer and the most vituperative. Calling himself "Peter Porcupine" and editing the Philadelphia Federalist *Porcupine's Gazette* from 1797, he argued that the Jeffersonian Republicans were the equivalent in America of the French revolutionary Jacobins and would bring catastrophe to the new nation. As Daniel notes, Cobbett broke down a previously honored distinction between the personal and the political, mocked local dignitaries like the radical doctor Benjamin Rush, whom he called a "murderous quack," and made annihilating attacks on Republican politicians and writers. Convicted of libel in a campaign orchestrated by the Philadelphia Republicans, he wrote a brilliant defense of press freedom before fleeing the country in 1800.

Why did politics become so contentious in the 1790s, and why did journalism follow suit? Daniel shows that the Federalists' and Republicans' disagreement over the future of the Republic was closely linked to the unfolding events in

France. Madison and Jefferson, writing in Freneau's *National Gazette*, argued that the fate of France and that of the United States were united: "the form our own government was to take depended much more on the events of France than any body had before imagined." When the French Revolution began in 1789, nearly all Americans welcomed what looked like the dawn of freedom, regarding French events as the logical sequel to those that had liberated their own country in the 1770s and 1780s. When heads began to fall to the guillotine in 1793, however, Federalists shrank back in dismay, explaining the Terror as an object lesson in the hazards of popular democracy. Cobbett called its perpetrators, the Jacobins, "a gang of bloodthirsty cannibals" who had "drenched the country with the blood of the innocent." Most Republicans, by contrast, approved, rationalizing the executions as necessary to exorcise the mystique of an old tyranny.

When Citizen Genet, the revolution's emissary, arrived in America in April 1793, Republican editors, led by Freneau, feted him while the Federalists warned that he was trying to draw America out of its neutrality and into war with Britain. Genet's meddling in American domestic affairs soon embarrassed the Republicans and obliged Jefferson to distance himself from Freneau. In 1794 and 1795, on the other hand, Jay's Treaty, by which Britain imposed humbling terms on the Americans, embarrassed the Federalists. Effigies of John Jay, the American negotiator, were paraded through the streets by angry Republican mobs and then burned. Even President Washington suffered lacerating attacks from Republican journalists like Bache. Washington, hitherto venerated on all sides as the Father of His Country, seemed to the Jeffersonians too much the patriarch, too lordly to preside over a democracy. Bache wrote, "no character or place ought to be so sacred in a republican government as to be above criticism. Inviolability and infallibility are royal qualities, which *slaves* only can comprehend." Contributors to the anti-Washington campaign in Bache's *Aurora*

often used such pen names as "Brutus" and "Casca," the killers of the overmighty Julius Caesar.

With the "XYZ Affair" of 1797-98, when French politicians like Talleyrand tried to extract bribes from American diplomats, the pendulum took another swing, giving Federalists a renewed surge of popularity. President Adams struggled to resist popular enthusiasm for war against France while Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, by whose terms "Jacobin" editors in the Republican cause (including Duane and Bache) faced prosecution. The acts are usually deplored retrospectively, sometimes even compared with McCarthyism, but as Daniel notes, they were "not only an effort to secure partisan advantage but ... an effort to 'civilize' the increasingly 'uncivilized' tone of American political discourse." Despite scattered prosecutions and convictions, they failed to silence the Republican press, whose leaders helped bring Jefferson to the White House in the election of 1800.

Daniel ends this superb and timely book with a reminder that America's great and durable institutions—freedom of the press among them—arose not out of the calm meditations of the Founders, but in the heat of acute political crises. "Scandal and political incivility have always been part of American public life," he concludes, and it was from the conflicts of the Founders' age that "their own great acts of collective political creativity emerged. ... Without such conflict the political triumphs of the early Republic would have been impossible." It is amusing to imagine Michael Moore, Sean Hannity, Al Franken, and Ann Coulter being spirited back to the 1790s. They might have to spend a week or two adjusting to simpler technologies and learning a new idiom, but they would find the stridency and rancor of political controversy entirely familiar. ■

Patrick Allitt is professor of history at Emory University. His latest work, The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History, is published by Yale University Press.

[*Defending the Republic: Constitutional Morality in a Time of Crisis*, Bruce P. Frohnen and Kenneth L. Grasso, eds., ISI Books, 352 pages]

Constitutional Moralist

By Daniel McCarthy

GEORGE CAREY is the dean of constitutional conservatives. Since 1961, he has been professor of government at Georgetown University, where he's a throwback in the best sense—to the days when faculty cared as much about teaching as about publishing, and political science still had an intimate association with political philosophy. In voluminous essays and a handful of small but densely reasoned books, Carey has kept alive a tradition of scholarship that seeks to understand the American Republic as the Founders understood it.

Over the decades, Carey has made a profound mark upon his peers and generations of students, as *Defending the Republic*, a critical celebration of his thought, shows. Editors Bruce Frohnen and Kenneth Grasso have assembled 14 distinguished contributors to illuminate, and sometimes challenge, Carey's ideas. Their essays explore half a dozen themes of his work: the contrast between a majoritarian republic and mass democracy; the clash between Christianity and the Enlightenment in the American tradition; the usurpation of legislative powers by the executive and judiciary; the fragile basis for public virtue; "constitutional morality"; and the rise of an activist ideology that may already have rendered the Constitution, as Carey fears, "a dead letter."

Frohnen and Paul Gottfried provide the essential background to Carey's thinking in the opening essays. To understand Carey, it helps to understand his friend and collaborator Willmoore Kendall, the "wild Yale don" (in Dwight Macdonald's words) who was "the most

important political theorist ... since the end of World War II" (according to Jeffrey Hart). In the 1960s, Kendall and Carey co-authored several important essays, including an introduction to *The Federalist*. After Kendall's death in 1968, Carey edited and completed another joint project, a slim, remarkable volume called *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition*. After analyzing several of America's foundational documents, from the Mayflower Compact to the Bill of Rights, Kendall and Carey concluded that the "supreme symbol" in American politics was not equality or individual rights but "self-government through *deliberative* process" conducted under a higher law.

"CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY" ITSELF RESTS ON A DEEPER FOUNDATION, ONE FOR WHICH THE FRAMERS COULD NOT PLAN: A VIRTUOUS PEOPLE. THIS NEED IS MET, IF AT ALL, BY CIVIL SOCIETY—ESPECIALLY BY CHURCHES AND FAMILIES.

Kendall defined himself as a "majority-rule democrat" and believed that the Constitution empowered the legislature over the executive and judicial branches. Carey has taken pains to show that this did not mean the Framers thought a majority should immediately get whatever it wants. They did not envision representatives as taking direct instruction from voters; instead congressmen and senators were to practice reasoned deliberation. The Constitution provides for a slow democracy. Yet even allowing for that, how does legislative supremacy square with the "separation of powers" and "checks and balances" that every schoolboy learns about?

Carey's answer is ingenious. While the Constitution imbues the legislature with power sufficient to dominate the other branches—Congress can impeach presidents and judges, eliminate their salaries and budgets, override executive vetoes, and restrict the courts' jurisdiction—*The Federalist* teaches statesmen not to abuse this authority. As Carey writes, "*The Federalist*, we may go so far as to say, provides us with what can

appropriately be termed a 'constitutional morality' ... it urges upon the rulers and ruled alike standards of behavior conducive to maintaining and perpetuating [the Republic's] coherence." Writing as Publius, Madison, Hamilton, and Jay composed an ethical as well as technical user's manual for the Constitution.

Even the Constitution as modified by *The Federalist* cannot guarantee peace, liberty, and order, however. "Constitutional morality" itself rests on a deeper foundation, one for which the Framers could not plan: a virtuous people. This need is met, if at all, by civil society—especially by churches and families. In the early Republic, despite sectarian

squabbles among Christians and between Christians and deists, a consensus on family and moral life prevailed. As the United States grew more diverse, the common denominator changed from a Protestant to a broadly Judeo-Christian outlook. Today, a nation of 300 million may be too large to have any public orthodoxy. As more than one essay in *Defending the Republic* notes, Carey has become increasingly sympathetic to Antifederalist criticisms of Madison's "extended republic"—a republic too extended to remain republican.

But that is not the "crisis" of *Defending the Republic's* subtitle. The constitutional order has been derailed not merely by a lack of cultural consensus but by the aggressive maneuvers of a new morality opposed to the ethos of the *Federalist* and the religious traditions of the people. Where the Framers emphasized deliberative process, the new morality—progressivism—demands "responsive," plebiscitary democracy. (Particularly in the form of presidential elections, which progressives construe as providing a "mandate" for specific

policies.) And to ensure that the democratic values of equality and tolerance prevail, progressivism requires that courts overrule legislatures. The Supreme Court is the new morality's weapon of choice.

Several of the essays in this volume explore the roots and ramifications of this ideology. Peter Augustine Lawler and Francis Canavan trace the new morality's origins to the individualist philosophy of John Locke—indeed, Canavan follows the trail all the way to William of Ockham. Canavan contends that Ockham's nominalism and Lockean liberalism have been imposed upon Americans through such Supreme Court decisions as *Griswold v. Connecticut* (which discovered a right to privacy—and to contraception) and *Roe v. Wade*. William Gangi, in his essay "The Rule of Men: How Caring Too Much About Important Things is Destroying Constitutional Law," takes the legal critique one step further and points to *Brown v. Board of Education* as, according to judicial progressives, "the birth of modern judicial review" and "causing Americans to care more deeply about all types of discrimination under law than ever before."

Gangi's essay is commendable for broaching, in *Brown*, a subject few conservatives want to revisit. That he does so is important since even well-intentioned judicial activism vitiates self-government. But Gangi's essay also illustrates a weakness of many of the contributions to *Defending the Republic*—they do not carry their analysis far enough. Gangi mixes the structural case against judicial activism with his own policy preferences. For example, "by tying the hands of Congress and state legislatures on the matter of flag burning," he asks, "haven't the courts diminished their ability to foster essential values such as patriotism and communal solidarity?"

In fact, the courts have done something worse—and very nearly the opposite. They have committed an offense not only against republican self-rule but against liberty as well, by depriving civil

libertarians of the need to organize politically, persuade the public, and win power in the legislature. By offering cheap symbolic liberties like the “right” to burn a flag, the courts crowd out the cause of reasoned liberty in the wider political process. Moreover, legislators who will not debate civil liberties seriously will hardly deliberate prudently over questions of war or peace, economic self-responsibility or socialism, either. The result has been a national legislature, under Republicans and Democrats alike, that passes the Patriot Act without reading it, continues to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and grants immunity to telecommunications firms that illegally give their customers’ data to federal agencies. The lack of deliberation in Congress, not coincidentally, mirrors the lack of serious and civil debate in our culture wars. The outcome in politics and culture alike has been a perpetual shouting match between antinomian liberals and authoritarian right-wingers, while constitutional traditions of republican liberty languish.

All too many conservatives have grown accustomed to guarding against threats to the Constitution from only one direction, the Left. Given the legacy of Woodrow Wilson, FDR, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and now Barack Obama—to say nothing of Harry Blackmun and Ruth Bader Ginsburg—that shouldn’t be surprising. But after Nixon and Bush II—to say nothing of Warren Burger, the “liberal” Republican who as governor of California interned Japanese-Americans during World War II—traditional conservatives must recognize that there is an anti-constitutional Right as well.

Carey has always known this, and two chapters in *Defending the Republic* address characteristically right-wing deviations from constitutional norms. Gary Gregg II, in his commanding essay “No Presidential Republic,” observes that “the voices of James Burnham and Willmoore Kendall,” enemies of presidential aggrandizement, “have now grown distant and largely unrecogniz-

able to contemporary conservatives. ... we have become preoccupied by other issues and have become intoxicated by the potent elixir of power politics.” Indeed, it’s ironic that for the sake of appointing another Scalia or Roberts, conservatives vote for the likes of a George W. Bush. They would fix the courts by contributing to the hypertrophy of the executive—while the most republican of our institutions, Congress, degenerates.

Today the Left is not the only vehicle for the new morality. Claes Ryn, in his essay “Neo-Jacobin Nationalism or Responsible Nationhood?,” shows how the revolutionary ethos of neoconservatism has sought to supplant constitutional morality. Ryn finds a parallel between the multiplicity of ways of life in a federal republic and peaceable relations with other nations:

States, counties, local communities, and individuals can, through the responsible exercise of freedom, contribute in their diverse ways to the good of the whole. This traditional American notion can be extended to international affairs and be translated into the kind of cosmopolitanism that is required for responsible nationhood and peace in a multicultural world.

By contrast, the imperial attitudes of neoconservatives toward the outside world have dreadful implications for self-government at home, undermining the humility essential to constitutional morality. “The common good depends on a limiting of egotism,” says Ryn.

Every essay in *Defending the Republic* deserves close attention. Frohnen and Grasso have paid fit tribute to George Carey by assembling a *Festschrift* nearly on par with his own work. In our time, Carey’s writings are as essential a guide to constitutional morality as *The Federalist* itself is to the Constitution. Read him, and consult this book to deepen your understanding of our most distinguished constitutionalist. ■

Daniel McCarthy is TAC’s senior editor.

[*The Next Conservatism*, Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind, St. Augustine’s Press, 147 pages]

Back to the Future

By Kara Hopkins

IN THE HIGH SUMMER of the Bush era, an administration official inquired about my “view from the cheap seats.” Excellent, thanks. Swaddled in ideological purity, safe above the muck of actual governance, I could spread generous disdain in all directions.

“Do you think that what you do makes any difference?” the Man in the Arena asked. (Never mind that Brooks Brothers’ nattiest wasn’t exactly “marred by dust and sweat and blood” after a bruising day at the laptop.)

Here my vanity got the better of my good sense. I might, ashamed to admit, have answered with an earnest ode to permanent things and the duty of dissent. There’s a chance I even quoted some decontextualized Burke on the subject of helpful antagonists. But he had a point. I snipe much and affect little—an apt definition of modern conservatism.

That’s not to say that he accomplished anything for the conservative cause either. Whatever his personal ideals, as a good soldier, his job required loyalty to the establishment.

No one tells you when you come to Washington that there are two political worlds. Not Democratic and Republican—those share a universe. They’re part of the industry of politics—a monopolistic enterprise with massive barriers to entry—cranking out reams of legislation no sane citizen should ever read. The bipartisan point is power for its own sake. Advancing a program comes second to consolidating and perpetuating control. Thus compromises are struck, convenient marriages blessed and dissolved. Tolkien’s ring is polished from both sides.

Then there’s the world of ideas, of high principle seeking some grounding

in political application. Enormous energy is spent on theories that can't long survive a collision with the machine. Activists see this coming and expect to lose. Martyrdom affirms their righteousness. And besides, without something to stand athwart yelling stop, they'd be out of business.

Most of the conservative reform manifestos published in the wake of the last two failed elections stage their assault from one realm or the other. The power-people would navigate out of the wilderness by a series of left turns. Their electoral strategy: co-opt the other side's constituencies by agreeing to certain liberal premises, but hold your own ranks by promising to distribute favors more prudently. The idea men, on the other hand, can't admit that their ideology cracked—even secular faith is infallible—so their slogans must simply be shouted louder into the liberal wind. Deeper tax cuts. Bigger tea parties. Iraq is a success story. If they're terrorists, it's not torture.

In *The Next Conservatism*, Paul Weyrich and William Lind assigned themselves the ambitious task of colonizing both worlds. They argue that the Right cannot live by politics alone. Cultural change is vital to the Republic's rehabilitation. But neither can conservatives abandon the political sphere, lest their opponents overwhelm it and inhibit their freedoms.

This reads like a reversal, at least for Weyrich, who in 1999 famously advised his fellow conservatives to "look at ways to separate ourselves from the institutions that have been captured by the ideology of Political Correctness, or by other enemies of our traditional culture." He noted at the time that much as the Republican Party had enjoyed electoral success, it had failed to accomplish conservative goals.

This book, rather than negating that call for retreat, claims to amplify it: "The next conservatism's strategic goal, to be attained by creating parallel structures, should not be permanent separation from the rest of society. It should be to re-take the whole of our society for our traditional culture, by the power of example."

The order of assault is not entirely clear. "Restoring the republic must start in Washington," the authors posit. But in the next breath: "In a real republic, life is lived locally, and most issues dealt with at the local level." Presumably the battles must be pitched simultaneously, an insight that may be this book's greatest strength.

For too long, conservatives have focused on getting policy right. Consider the energy devoted to the pro-life movement, the centerpiece of the conservative cultural agenda. Countless marches and litmus tests haven't laid a hand on *Roe*. Democratic support is near total, and Republican politicians recognize that as long as it remains law, millions unwarmed by their other initiatives will continue to trudge to the polls. These voters' commitment to the unborn is honorable. But by narrowing the conservative interest in culture to a legislative checklist—abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia—the Right has failed to perpetuate a temperament that might have made it more broadly relevant.

Conservatives once appreciated the limits of human perfectibility, the virtue of localism, the value of thrift. Had those guardrails remained, would we have advanced a social engineering scheme like No Child Left Behind? Believed that Iraqis would welcome us with flowers? Fallen for the delusion that piles of paper made us rich?

The Next Conservatism speaks to where food comes from, the way neighborhoods are constructed, and how new technologies impact relationships—areas most delegates to the Republican National Convention would consider far outside their range. Perhaps that's just as well: none of this can be programmed; it must be practiced.

The authors' plan of attack is best understood through their vision of foreign policy, which is perfectly congruent with their cultural model. They lean heavily on the work of Col. John Boyd, who defined grand strategy as "the art of connecting yourself to as many independent power centers as possible while isolating the enemy from as many independent power

centers as possible." In a world marked by the decline of the state, that means connecting to as many centers and sources of order as possible. When we invade centers of disorder, not only do we enmesh ourselves in chaos, we unite these enemies against a common threat and most always fail to leave a more ordered state. By isolating ourselves, we would not only spare blood and treasure, but blunt a long-term challenge by allowing internal contradictions to work themselves out. (The authors take care to clarify that America has never been totally isolated and should continue to engage the rest of the world through trade and the power of moral example. Sen. Robert Taft set the standard: to be "respected as the most disinterested and charitable nation in the world.")

Neither do these authors advocate total pacifism. Rather, they share the conviction of the great German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz that "Defense is simply the stronger form of war." They write:

When we tell Moslems that we intend to remake them in our image—as Michael Scheuer put it, to allow Mrs. Mohammed to vote, vamp and abort—they have little choice but to fight us. In contrast, a defensive grand strategy leaves Islamic societies alone, to be whatever they want to be. They have less reason to focus on us, leaving them to fight among themselves.

Weyrich and Lind imply that the same strategy carries over to culture. The modern conservative movement has disastrously elevated freedom over the older virtue of order—worse, a misconception of freedom that envisions it not as a function of limits but as a byproduct of democracy. So rather than being a means of protecting individual enterprise, it becomes a weapon whereby majority will rules.

Conservatives who complain that movies are too smutty and teens dress too slutty miss the point. Rather than denouncing a corrupt culture to which a majority already subscribes, far better

to seek out and develop centers of order.

As with military force, conservatives should use politics defensively rather than offensively. "We should not seek to use political power to ram our agenda down anyone else's throat. Rather, we should employ it to prevent government from ramming ideologies, utopian schemes and other radical 'improvements' down our throats."

In many respects, this book works better as a dictionary than a strategy manual. Some of its policy prescriptions are wise, including a "none of the above" ballot option and a renewed commitment to trains and streetcars. (Conservatives who rail against funding Amtrak might ask themselves whether they also want the government to get out of the road-building business. Is it so much better to subsidize a lifestyle that fractures communities and makes us dependent on dangerous foreign suppliers?)

Certain dictates are more debatable. For instance, the call to "retroculture" will strike many residents of the reality-based community as contrived. Conservatism isn't about resisting innovation but channeling change through the architecture of custom—venerating history without attempting to re-enact it. Conservatives needn't become Amish to recognize that a productive country must build something other than pyramid schemes.

But quibbling over these details diminishes the larger point: recovering the notion that "conservatism is not an ideology but a way of life." Weyrich and Lind's *Next Conservatism* is about perpetuating the tradition of Burke and Kirk and Taft—not attempting to give national healthcare a Republican whitewash. After years of ideological innovation, we're long overdue for a strategy "to secure ... our hearths and homes, our farms and fire-sides, not 'democracy' in Karjackistan."

Sadly, the project begun in tandem finished solo. Paul Weyrich died before this book was released. Bidding farewell to his friend, Lind envisions him "running through fields of asphodel," an allusion to that mythical Greek plane between Heaven and Hades reserved for souls distinguished neither by heroism

nor roguery. Upon entering, they drank from the river Lethe and lost their distinct identities.

Was Lind implying that his old comrade's legacy was somehow mediocre? Far from. The martial Greeks used the myth as a call to arms: those who didn't fight had no chance of winning passage to glorious Elysium. And the *Next Conservatism* isn't about daring exploits.

My Bushian friend and I had bought into a modern version of the old myth. We were engaged in our own kinds of combat, seeking to win the Elysian

wreath best suited to each—one power, the other principle. The *Next Conservatism* doesn't eschew either. Engagement is vital. So too is political imagination. But our means were mistaken. The future doesn't belong to the Beltway's best and brightest. It will be worked out on a human scale, around common tables, in millions of decent decisions by conservative Americans ready to move past movement politics. ■

Kara Hopkins is TAC's executive editor.

Kauffman

Continued from page 29

disgusted, but now I try to be amused, though how much, really, can one take? And for how long? Sixty-one years ago the disgusted but amused H.L. Mencken covered his last campaign, which pitted the double atom-bomb dropper Harry Truman versus the little man on the wedding cake, Thomas E. Dewey. Was Obama versus McCain really that much worse a choice?

Our decline predates the Bushes, the Clintons, even the Kennedys. Trace it, if you like, back to the overthrow of the gentle Articles of Confederation and the triumph of Hamilton, Madison, and James Wilson over Patrick Henry, Luther Martin, and Melancton Smith in 1787-88. We have a helluva losing streak going, but there is a value in showing up for a game and taking your swings even if you have no chance. To give in is a sin.

So many of the vital and flavorful American political traditions go utterly, offensively, incredibly unrepresented in national discourse: the Anti-Federalists, the Populists, Brahmin anti-imperialists, independent liberals, prairie socialists, Old Right libertarians. It is our ennobling duty to keep these fires burning, even in the present darkness. For they illuminate the hopeful signs in our midst: homeschoolers, community-supported agriculture, independence movements from Vermont to Hawaii,

the kids fired up by Ron Paul.

"Be joyful though you have considered all the facts," advises Wendell Berry. Excellent advice.

Our country is Wendell Berry, Townes Van Zandt, Mavis Staples, Ken Kesey, Cormac McCarthy, Levon Helm... How can one despair with these by our sides, at our backs, in our heads? Editorialists in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, shouters on the television, sallow callow master bloggers who jerk out their vitriol over dissenters: they aren't worth the scorn in a thumbnail vial. Their depressing and ephemeral work dissipates with the air it befools, the paper it poisons, the screen it scars. The real country endures. It produces whatever books and songs and films and paintings add up to American culture. It is where sandlot baseball and farm markets come from; it is where peace dwells in this nation of perpetual war.

Sursum corda, pals. We ain't dead yet. Turn off the TV. Reject the chains they have fashioned for you. Live as if in a free country. Look again at the things highest unto you. That's America. That's worth saving. ■

Bill Kauffman's most recent books are Ain't My America (Holt/Metropolitan) and Forgotten Founder, Drunken Prophet: The Life of Luther Martin (ISI).

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Larry Kudlow



Matt Welch



Steve Forbes

Why Steve Forbes and John Mackey Love FreedomFest

My favorite story is **Steve Forbes**. Last year he was going to fly in, give a speech, sign some books, and fly back to New York. But when he saw the lineup of speakers, he decided to stay all 3 days. Attendees were amazed to find Mr. Forbes walking in the exhibit hall or sitting next to them in the workshops. And he's coming back this year -- all 3 days.

Libertarian CEO **John Mackey** also makes a point every year to take time from his busy schedule running Whole Foods Market to come for the entire conference. "I love FreedomFest," he told me. "Wonderfully interesting people and non-stop intellectual stimulation. I'm really looking forward to FreedomFest 2009."

Last year 1,427 individuals came from all 50 states and around the world (as far away as New Zealand), a 42% increase. This year we expect even a bigger crowd.

Representatives of all the top free-market think tanks and organizations make it a point to be there, including **Reason, Cato, Heritage, Fraser, FEE, and Hillsdale College**. **Liberty Editors Conference** holds their annual conference there. And **Laissez Faire Books** is our official bookstore. (C-SPAN films us every year.)

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At every FreedomFest, we also hold our **World Economic Summit**, and this year commands your attention. Our theme is "Clear and Present Danger," with keynote speakers **Larry Kudlow, Steve Moore, Charles Gasparino, Tyler Cowen, and John Fund**, and an "All Star Forecasting Panel," with financial gurus (**Peter Schiff, Alex Green, Rick Rule, Fred Foldvary, Bert Dohmen**) who warned attendees in the past two years about the growing financial crisis, and what they are predicting now.

The theme for this year's event is "Imagine the Possibilities." This year we are planning 9 debates, including: "US Foreign Policy--isolationist or imperialist?.... Should hard drugs be legalized?... Keynes, Hayek, Friedman: Who Best to Solve the Financial Crisis?" See **John Mackey** take on the **Objectivists** in "Randian vs. Conscious Capitalism"....**Prof. Richard Vedder** take on **Al Norman** on "Wal-Mart, Good or Bad?"

Plus we're organizing a science fiction/fantasy mini-festival, highlighting the works of Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein, and Ayn Rand.... **Prof. Steve Watts** on juvenal and adult fantasy in post-war America (Walt Disney's Fantasyland vs. Hugh Hefner's Playboy).... Sacred text project (Rabbis, priests, Sikhs and other true believers talking about the Bible, Koran, Tao Te Ching, etc.).... Professors showing how to write a classic.... **Prof. Art Benjamin** on the magic and mystery of mathematics.... and two Canadians tell us "Why 60 Million Frenchmen Can't be Wrong!"

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To paraphrase Ben Franklin, let's all hang out together in Vegas, or surely we shall all hang separately. Fly there, drive there, bike there, be there!

Yours for liberty, AEIOU
Mark Skousen, *Producer*

P. S. Good news! We just renegotiated our hotel contract, and Bally's is now offering us room rates at \$74 per night!

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